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THE
HAPPY
ALIENIST



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THE HAPPY ALIENIST

A VIENNESE CAPRICE

by

WALLACE SMITH



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THE HAPPY ALIENIST

I

ALL the mystery in the mad crime of Professor Ernst Volk is locked officially in the most private vault of the Vienna Institute of Psycho-Criminological Research. Meticulously documented, weighted with neat seals, it is to remain secret for twenty years. Science, so jealous of its dignity, refuses to talk with all the stubborn ardour of the underworld, the citizens of which notoriously remain loyal to this code of silence, even when they have nothing to speak about; or, indeed, when no one has asked them anything.

The Viennese police were glad enough to let it go at that, in the hands of the scientific colleagues of Professor Volk. Half a mystery, the police consoled themselves, was better than no crime. This was especially so with Inspector

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Max Schnorrheim, who felt a little silly about it all from the start.

It was to Inspector Schnorrheim that Professor Volk made his first confession. It was over the telephone, at a moment when the Inspector was about to leave headquarters to investigate another clue in the baffling and gruesome Holzbruck murder mystery. He recognised the Professor's voice, which was professionally calm. Out of habit, he signalled his police-stenographer to listen-in on the extension telephone.

"Good evening, Inspector," said Professor Volk. "I would appreciate it very much if you would come to my apartment as soon as possible.

Inspector Schnorrheim began to mumble a polite excuse, urging the current clue.

"Ach, that Holzbruck case!" said the Professor, scornfully. "But, of course, it is your duty. I will wait for you, then. You will come as soon as you can, no?"

"May one ask, over the telephone——?" began the Inspector.

"Naturally you may ask," replied the Professor. "You are to arrest me."

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The Inspector was hardened to policeman jokes. He chuckled.

"Arrest me," the Professor went on, "for murder."

"Listen——" said Schnorrheim.

"Please, you listen," said the Professor. "I have killed my wife and my best friend, who betrayed me. One moment . . . will you please hold the telephone?"

"Hey, wait!" called the Inspector.

There was no answer. He held the telephone, with both hands. He glanced at his stenographer, who was leaning into his ear-phone harness. Out of the far silence they heard slow footsteps, retreating. A voice, vaguely. A scream. The sharp cr-rack of a pistol shot. The footsteps, returning, in slow crescendo. And Professor Volk's calm voice again:

"I have also just killed my mistress . . . ah, you will come at once? Thank you, Inspector . . . yes; yes, of course I'll wait. . . ."

Eighteen minutes later Professor Ernst Volk, considered the most illustrious among the younger psychologists of his day, was under arrest. Never exactly one of the reticent

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scientists, he repeated his confession and amplified it. He was pathetically ready to die for his crime.

Inspector Schnorrheim's detectives at the same time arrested a man they found on the scene; a man who glared idiotically and screamed with ghoul's mirth over the broken forms of Professor Volk's victims. He was taken as the professor's accomplice. His name was Willi Zimmerkopf and his occupation: artist. He also confessed.

Of course, in a mystery story, it is unethical to reveal frankly and at once the person who did the crime. It seems to strip the narrative of suspense, that most vital ingredient of murder mysteries. Yet, as Professor Volk himself said often enough, there can be no mystery in the mere fact that people kill each other.

"On the contrary," the Professor as often maintained, "the mystery really is why so few of them follow that entirely normal and healthy impulse. The only remaining mystery is in the mental mechanism which precedes and finally evokes the homicidal incident."

Thus Professor Volk, no mean commentator

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on matters of the sort.

Such a candid beginning, however unethical, has its advantages. These are apart from the Shakespearian suggestion of wholesale fatality, which the writer from Stratford no doubt would have kept for a death-rattling finish. There shall be a more notable conclusion to this account: not only a Shakespearian but a happy ending. Which is a paradoxical plenty to promise.

Among the other advantages, there will not be crafty chapters devoted to casting suspicion on Emile, the pale, soft-footed butler; nor sly paragraphs indicating the wastrel nephew and heir of the deceased; inventing strange behaviour for the ingénue in the leghorn hat, who said she was in the garden when it happened. Nor will there be those peculiar myopias which enable the logical and ultimate villain, the frustrated insurance solicitor, to slink through the entire work unsuspected. Best of all: there will be no windy, last chapter in which the detective—neither the crisp professional from Scotland Yard nor the amateur who goes about in spats, but is really hellish clever under a vapid

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surface—recapitulates the entire narrative, clue by clue and deduction on deduction, to the gasping wonder of the little group gathered in the baronial library.

Not even Inspector Max Schnorrheim will indulge himself in this fashion. Not that he wouldn't. A bottle or two of Erdener Treppchen on some chummy terrace at the edge of the Ringstrasse and the Inspector gets chatty enough. But, as has been set down, he was well pleased to hand the mystery over to the Professor's colleagues in science. And, as has been set down also, they choose not to discuss it. They won't talk, huh? Are they still afraid the Professor will return and make profound monkeys of them and their hypotheses, as he used to do? Twenty years, indeed.

Let us to the mystery of Professor Volk's peculiar crime, beginning with the Professor's calm confession.

II

It happened in spring in Vienna, when and where anything may be expected to happen and

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usually does. Or, more to the point, it may be the unexpected, as happened in the amazing case of Professor Volk.

Spring in Vienna! A new stirring of the blood so traditionally of the city that is known as *Wiener Blut* through the world, and most fondly by those who bear it in their veins. And a new stirring of leaves in the trees overhanging the ancient Ringstrasse. A song along the waters of the Danube, its name given to a waltz that decades of playing—even years of radio renditions—have been unable to stale. Fresh animation even on the Kaiser's Bridge, crossing it, where gargoyle cripples put out their claws, begging *pfennigs*. Pleasant gossip and laughter across the tables of terrace cafés. Soft evenings in the woods of the Prater. Young lovers walking to the distant music of the carrousel and to the pulsing song in their hearts. . . .

Spring, to limp no further lyrically, and in Vienna. And so it happened to Professor Volk, who had been used to classifying the seasonal madness with the less unpleasant lunacies of the world. His opinion carried the weight of authority. He was ranked among the younger

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psychologists, but youth in that profession is a comparative matter. It may be said, explicitly, that his beard was not so abundant as that of Sigmund Freud nor so white as that of Havelock Ellis. In fact, Professor Volk restrained himself to what might be classified roughly as a vandyke. It was not so much professional adornment as an escape from daily shaving. He kept it fairly tidy through the vigilance of the young woman, Dr. Vera Petrovanof, who was his assistant and who reminded him of such routine necessities. In the end he had the vandyke shaved off entirely. A woman's whim, that was. It came later.

The beard had reached an Airedale state on that April morning in Vienna when things mysteriously began to happen to the Professor. Dr. Petrovanof, known in Volk's bachelor household as Fräulein Vera, surveyed the hirsute disorder.

"Be sure and stop at the barber's," said Fräulein Vera. "And have Herr Schmidt trim your beard."

"Already I have contemplated a visit to Herr Schmidt," said the Professor. "You choose to

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believe, no, that I am incapable of such a decision?"

Fräulein Vera was used to such blustering.

"It is beginning to look," she observed, "like the whiskers of a moujik."

"Pah, nonsense!" snorted the Professor. "Like all women, you try to make yourself important by such trivialities."

"Herr Schmidt," she repeated, firmly.

"You would like to make me out," he said, "one of those absent-minded savants so bemused by their vast learning that they are helpless to cope with the everyday trifles of existence. Pah!"

He started indignantly from the room.

"You are forgetting your portfolio," said Fräulein Vera, hurrying to get it for him. "The lecture is at eleven, at the Clinic. Have you a clean handkerchief?"

"Pah!" said the Professor.

Fräulein Vera smiled as he departed in his petty storm and went to the telephone. Fräulein Vera had come from Russia to study psychiatry in Vienna, the hot-bed of that exacting science, for which the once-reigning house of Hapsburg

had done so much in supplying case-histories. Fräulein Vera had been a brilliant student; too brilliant, really, as things turned out. Plunging eagerly into the dark pool of the human mind, she found herself beyond her depth. She recognised in her own mentality the symptoms of a morbid psychosis. She accepted this lightly at first and applied what she knew of corrective treatment. Finally, desperate, she went to Professor Volk as a patient.

Professor Volk's smile parted his vandyke as he listened. She noted, even in that forlorn hour, that his beard needed trimming. But the master's smile brought a feeling of relief at once, despite the mockery of his words.

"Ach, quite elementary," said the Professor, "another example of the incomplete psychiatrist bewildered by sheer simplicity. Self-analysis, my Slavic friend, is the most dangerous of diversions. I know of only two, maybe three, men who might safely indulge themselves and they are too wise to attempt it. I will not name them except to say that the doubtful one is a foreigner. The other lives in Vienna, also."

He put her through a series of examinations

and tests, with some of which she was already familiar, and adroitly straightened out the kink in her mind. She looked upon him as her saviour. In the end, she surprised herself and embarrassed the Professor by begging to serve him. He finally agreed.

"Very well," he said. "The Russian mental processes, if they may be called that, might be amusing to observe. But there are two things to remember; two warnings I must give you. Have I your attention?"

She nodded eagerly, elated at his acceptance of her, however grudging.

"First of all," he said, "in cases like yours, the patient invariably attempts to transfer his or her affection to the one who effects the cure. Second: it is a matter of statistics that assistants to great psychiatrists commit suicide, usually by hanging themselves in lavatories. That is because they attempt, without the full equipment—as you, Fräulein, have attempted—to psycho-analyse themselves."

She had a way of smiling, slowly, that prolonged the Mongol tilt of her eyes, which were grey-green. Their long lashes and her straight

eyebrows conspired with her black hair to make her skin seem fairer than it was. Fräulein Vera was more exotically attractive than a psychiatrist's assistant should be.

"We must have none of that nonsense," said the Professor. "No love—and no suicide. You understand?"

"Perfectly," said Fräulein Vera. "Everything except: why they select lavatories. Why?"

"The enquiring habit of mind," responded the Professor, "is an asset, scientifically. I have prepared a minor paper on the subject of which you ask. You may study it if you wish."

In this manner, Dr. Vera Petrovanof began her duties as assistant to the formidable Professor Volk. She had kept their agreement as best she could. At least, she had not committed suicide. She assured herself that the feeling she had for the Professor was one of respect for a man so exalted in his realm. She came to consider him a god. A god, it is true, who needed reminding about whisker-trimming, wearing rubbers in the rain and regular meal-times, as well as about his appointments for the Clinic, for classrooms and for consultations. All of

which Fräulein Vera undertook, in addition to her other duties. Professor Volk, so terrifying to his students, and even to his colleagues, had come to accept with grumbling docility the scoldings of his devoted assistant.

Fräulein Vera smiled that slow smile of hers as she picked up the telephone.

III

PROFESSOR VOLK strolled down the avenue, unaware of April. He was gloating over the imbecility of a lesser psychiatrist who had proved his imbecility by setting it down on paper and thereby presenting Professor Volk the opportunity, indeed the duty, of demolishing him utterly. Professor Volk, anticipating the demolition, chuckled as he entered the Kaiser Franz Josef Clinic.

He was chief consultant in the department of neurology and psychopathology at the Clinic, although consultations with Professor Volk habitually became crisp monologues, contempt-

uously delivered. He served in the same capacity at the Kaiserin Elizabeth Asylum for the Insane and the General Hospital. He also occupied the chair of psychiatry at the University of Vienna. He was entitled to as many letters after his name as there are in the alphabet. There was no need of such decoration. It was enough, in the profession, to say "Volk," without even the "Professor."

He took with cool detachment the responsibility of sending hundreds to madhouse cells and, with the same calm, mended minds as a watchmaker mends some exquisite, broken instrument. It was generally accepted—the Professor, of course, would not discuss matters of the sort—that the legendary Freud himself sought Professor Volk's advice on knotty cases; that Wilhelm Stekel had offered to write the foreword for the forthcoming Volk volume and that R. von Krafft-Ebing had submitted to him the proofs of his revised work. The Professor laboured mightily on his own writings, which were instrumental in his capture of the Nobel award for achievement in his field. That was another thing which happened that year. But

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one couldn't blame that on the Viennese spring . . .

His honours he took as unconcernedly as his responsibilities, as well as the wealth that went with both. He was very wealthy. Engrossed with the hidden lives of men and women—the lives that were lived in the crooked recesses of the brain—he had but the vaguest conception of their outward existence. This gave him an unworldliness which at times was refreshing and at others somewhat pitiful. He had small contact with men outside his hours in the institutions he distinguished and none whatever with women other than patients. Of course, there was always Fräulein Vera. For books, outside of technical writings, for music and for the theatre he had no inclination.

"The only plot," he used to say, "is the human mind. What happens there alone is interesting."

Once, some one suggested travel.

"Travel?" said the Professor. "I travel in a world quite unexplored—the world that is the mentality, so-called, of the human race."

It may be that he sometimes grew bored with his solitary plot. Likely as not, the shadowy

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trails he followed in the mental jungle brought weariness. He hinted as much earlier in that fateful spring. The imbecility of the lesser psychiatrist had lifted his spirits. He was still in good humour in the afternoon when he left the hospital. He decided to walk across town, even to dare the pleasant turmoil of the boulevard.

Dr. Hugo Herbst, staff neurologist at the Clinic, also chose the boulevard that sunshiny afternoon. He did not have the agreeable malice which the Professor's rival had furnished. He didn't need it. It was enough for Dr. Herbst that it was spring, that he strode the boulevard and that his steps were not bound homewards. Dr. Herbst was not a bachelor. He had been married many years to a worthy lady, who was appreciative enough of her husband's professional rank, but who persisted in her belief that his special title had to do with the treatment of neuralgia, from which she suffered intermittently. Mrs. Herbst frequently wondered aloud why her husband did not have a fortune equal to that of Professor Volk. Seven years ago Dr. Herbst, in a moment of pique, had

replied that perhaps one of the reasons was that Professor Volk had had the sense to remain a bachelor. He regretted the words almost as soon as he had spoken them. He regretted them from time to time afterward.

So, Dr. Herbst, moving homeward, was in a jolly mood. He looked upon life as it flowed along the boulevard, finding it excellent, indeed, yet seeing from time to time symptoms interesting to a neurologist. And he asked himself how any one could be afflicted with a nervous ailment with April's tonic in the very air. Thus engaged, he had to look a second time to be sure it really was Professor Volk he saw, standing transfixed before a smart shop-window.

In the shop-window was a group of wax-headed clothing-dummies, garbed in the latest that Vienna fashion had to offer. Impelled by his own light mood, Dr. Herbst dared speak informally to his superior:

"Aha! Professor Volk, I believe."

Dr. Herbst noted, with the habit of a neurologist, that the Professor was not startled when suddenly addressed. Instead, he turned to Dr. Herbst the shy, naïve smile he had before

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strangers. Dr. Herbst, already made bold by the tonic air, went further, gaily:

“And do I find the world-celebrated psychiatrist fascinated by the trend in women’s fashions?”

“You do not,” said Professor Volk. “You interrupt a most congenial moment of social intercourse.”

The shy smile disappeared. In its place was the look that Professor Volk wore in the Clinic. Dr. Herbst wished he had kept on down the boulevard. The Professor’s austerity melted somewhat.

“But now that you have interrupted, my dear Herbst,” he said, “permit me to introduce you to my pleasant friends.”

“Hah?” gasped Dr. Herbst.

The Professor indicated the wax dummies in the window. He was smiling again. It was a tired smile.

“You have no idea what a relief they are,” he said. “To look at human figures, into human faces, without wondering—or knowing all too readily—what is going on in their heads; behind their hypocritical foreheads; in the convolutions

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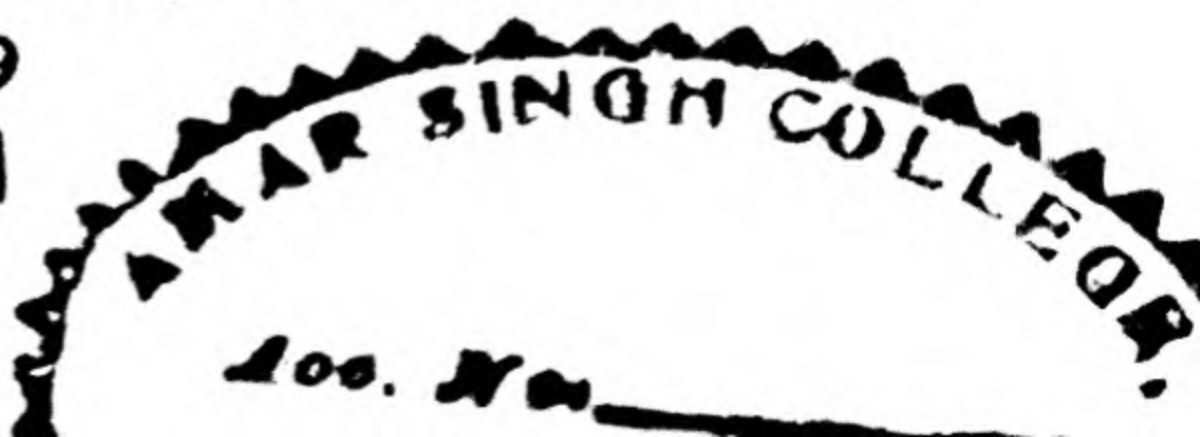
of their brains . . . ach, it is beautiful! No work for the neurologist there, Herbst. And no worry for the psychiatrist. No complexes, no inhibitions, no fixations; in brief: the ideal person."

He turned again to his rapt contemplation of the wax-headed models. Dr. Herbst, who didn't know whether this was a psychiatric joke or not, felt that he really was intruding. He mumbled apologies, lifted his hat and was off. Professor Volk gave no sign that he noticed the departure.

The story of the dummies in the shop-window was added to the legend of Professor Volk's amusing and harmless eccentricities. It might have amused his colleagues even more had they known of Lilith, hidden in the secret chamber where he did his writing. It was to Lilith, seated in a chair at the edge of his long writing-table, that Professor Volk gave himself utterly; revealed all the subtleties of his mind and his work which the world might never know. It was to Lilith that he chatted between scratchings of his pen.

"You are the only one, Lilith, to whom I can give my confidence," he said, "and be sure that

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confidence will be respected. To you I can bring my weariness and my problems and know that I will find sympathy. To you I can reveal my great discoveries without receiving either jealous scepticism or false, senseless adulation. And I am always certain there will be no silly questions."

And he would go to writing again with the quill-pen he fancied and which he sharpened himself. The secret chamber was concealed in that section of his apartment which he used as a study and, more and more infrequently, as an office to receive his patients. It wasn't entirely a secret. Fräulein Vera knew about the room, although she had never been in it. Neither had the servants. Only Professor Volk knew where the key was concealed.

IV

STRANGELY enough, the Professor remembered about the barber-shop and turned his steps toward the establishment of Herr Schmidt. Wherefore, the whiskers must share blame with

the season for what happened that spring. For it was in Herr Schmidt's that he met Kuno, Graf Adelhorst, and it was through him . . .

Kuno, Graf Adelhorst, was the charming scion of decadent nobility. His ancient family had been impoverished, stripped of its grand titles, by a war so abstrusely concluded that experts still debated bitterly the factors responsible for victory during such periods as they were not attempting to determine which side had won. Down Graf Kuno's forehead, just touching the right eyebrow, ran a precisely limned scar that looked like a sabre-cut. It wasn't. He had been too young for the war, a fact which consoled him. It would have been too ironical to have ridden forth with the Household Guards, in whose ranks the Adelhorsts had ridden for generations—at least, in parades—and to have ridden back to the political chaos that took the Adelhorst estate in its blind stride. The scar on his forehead had been placed there by the hoe of an emotional vassal on the ancestral estate. This had occurred after Kuno, then a lad, idling over an ancient manuscript in the castle library, sought to revive

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certain medieval rights of the liege lord. Kuno had chosen the vassal's red-cheeked sister for the historic revival.

Kuno was living by his wits, an occupation for which he was well suited. The spring, though, found his talent somewhat thwarted by a circumstance over which he had attempted to become angry on his way to Herr Schmidt's. The attempt was unsuccessful, despite the fact that, at the moment, his fortune was his exquisitely tailored wardrobe, three clinking crowns in his trousers pocket and the facial massage which he was receiving from the respectful hands of Gustl, first assistant to Herr Schmidt. Presently, in his gracious way, he would request Herr Schmidt to charge the massage to his account. And Herr Schmidt would do this, although he was known to mutter socialistically about the riff-raff nobility. Graf Adelhorst wasn't like the others, though. Now and then he'd drop in and settle his bill; in part, anyway.

Kuno's complacent anticipation of the transaction with Herr Schmidt was interrupted by the entrance of Professor Volk. It was difficult

to believe that this mild-visaged man with the bashful smile was the dreadful psychiatrist, the intellectual Titan to whom science made obeisance. The Professor seemed bewildered to find himself in the place. He had remembered to drop in at the barber's, but he had quite forgotten why. It was, apparently, a familiar situation.

"You wish the beard trimmed, Herr Professor," announced Herr Schmidt.

"Of course, of course," said the Professor, smiling shyly. "It's beginning to look, no, like the whiskers of a moujik?"

Gustl explained in a whisper to Kuno: Herr Schmidt knew what Professor Volk required because his assistant, Dr. Petrovanof, had telephoned instructions.

"She always telephones," said Gustl, "but sometimes he doesn't remember to come in until a week or two later."

"Such a great mind," queried Kuno, "and he doesn't even know when his beard needs trimming?"

"He uses that mind for other things," said Gustl. "Why should he waste it on whiskers?"

"Whiskers are very important to a professor," said Kuno.

"I would be the last to deny that, Excellenz," replied Gustl, "not only because of my art, which includes a study of beards, their care and character, but because in my native province, we were taught to respect the beard; to understand it, if it were merely a mark of age, of the impostor or of learning. I could tell you many things about beards."

"No doubt," said Kuno. "Yet no doubt I would still repeat: whiskers are important to a professor."

"Professor Volk's not that kind," protested the barber. "He would be just as important with a clean shave every day. He's famous all over the world."

"I know that, Gustl."

"And he's rich, Excellenz. Very rich."

"I didn't know *that*," said Kuno.

Through Gustl's manipulating fingers, Graf Adelhorst peeked at the Professor. He was perched in a chair and obviously lost in thought—the Professor was composing his reply to the imbecilic upstart—as Herr Schmidt pruned the

beard. It was amusing and quite interesting. Kuno had a whimsical notion. . . .

Herr Schmidt concluded his ministrations with a few rather affected snippings, executed with his head to one side and his eyes half-closed in critical contemplation of his skill. He found his work good, said as much with an appreciative sigh, and stepped back, untying the shroud from his subject's throat. He offered a hand-mirror.

"Eh? What now?" asked the Professor. "Ach, excuse me, Herr Schmidt. I was thinking . . . what's that for?"

He indicated the mirror in Herr Schmidt's hand.

"But no, Herr Schmidt," said the Professor. "The mirror is a hypocrite and a traitor. Pledged to return a truthful image, it betrays its trust. It fawningly repeats the lie each man lives; without which he must cease to exist."

He moved clumsily from the chair:

"Besides, I do not need it," he said to Herr Schmidt. "I know that you have done your work well and that I have a splendid hair-cut."

"A splendid beard-trim," said Herr Schmidt.

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"Exactly," said the Professor. "Good-day."

He was about to leave without his hat. The boy at the check-rack reminded him. A pleasant voice came through his confusion:

"A poet has prayed, and in barbaric dialect, for the gift of seeing ourselves as others see us."

Professor Volk, with that strangely naïve smile of his, looked into the good-natured features of the Graf Adelhorst.

"Would a mirror with such power," Kuno asked, "reveal the truth?"

"On the contrary," answered the Professor, "it would reflect only the distortions of malice and hate and envy, with which our enemies, and often those we believe our friends, secretly regard us. And the way our true friends look upon us—but no, young man; it is preposterous."

"And if there were an honest mirror," Kuno persisted pleasantly.

"Man would be driven mad," said the Professor. "Madder even than he is now."

Again he was ready to leave. Kuno detained him by introducing himself and put all his charm into the petty ceremony. The Professor responded shyly, admiring the other's worldly

air. He stammered, attempting to decline, when Kuno invited him to a nearby café to have a cup of coffee on the terrace. Kuno waved aside the mild reluctance. The amazed barbers smiled as they saw the two walk out together, Graf Adelhorst's arm through that of Professor Volk.

"I don't like the looks of it, though," said Herr Schmidt.

"It'll do the Professor good," said Gustl, "to get out for a change, away from his Clinic and his work . . ."

"That Graf Kuno is a schemer," said Herr Schmidt.

"Don't worry," said Gustl. "Professor Volk will be more than his match. Besides, the Graf didn't even know the Professor is wealthy."

Then Gustl remembered.

"*Aber, Himmel*, he knows now!"

They both did the Graf Adelhorst an injustice. It was almost an hour before Kuno thought of the Professor's wealth; seriously, that is. The whim which had impelled Kuno to address the Professor was innocent enough. He thought it might be diverting for half an hour or so to chat with a man who knew at once so

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much and so little of his fellow-humans. And Kuno had half an hour or so to spare before his engagement with Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhl.

V

So they sat at a tiny table under the April sky, Kuno smiling in a slightly superior but entirely friendly way over a brandy tempered with benedictine and the Professor smiling shyly back over his cup of coffee. They chatted cosily. Around them on the terrace, sun-dappled through the spring leaves of the bordering trees, sat a Viennese crowd in the covert excitement of the Viennese spring afternoon. The crowd regaled itself with smiling gossip and with the combination of pastry, puffed with custard and suffocated with whipped cream, and tall glasses of Pilsener beer; a combination peculiarly attractive to those of *Wiener Blut*.

Kuno remarked the mood of the crowd and ascribed it to the lure of the season.

"Spring," said the Professor, as he had said before, "is another form of insanity."

"One, however," suggested Kuno, "for which there is a handy cure."

"You mean, of course: love," the Professor said.

"To be sure."

"I wonder if the remedy is not worse than the affliction?"

"In any event, a pleasant medicine to take."

They sipped and smiled again. The Professor responded to the holiday spirit of the occasion by ordering a stout slice of *kaffee-kuchen*. Kuno watched him and weighed his next question:

"It is said—of course, you know how things are gossiped about—that you have never . . . that is, you have never been, say, interested in a woman."

"That is not merely gossip."

"But——?"

"You are shocked, Excellenz, that I have never taken the pleasant medicine you prescribe? But then, I have never been ill with spring . . . at least, not since my student days."

Kuno looked for a trace of wistfulness. He wasn't sure.

"It seems a shameful waste of talent," he commented.

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"I have never concerned myself," said the Professor, "with the boast of masculinity which men find so essential."

"I didn't mean that, exactly," said Kuno. "I mean, it seems deplorable that a man so thoroughly aware of the workings of the human mind should not experiment more—shall we say practically?—with it."

"It would not be too interesting," declared the Professor.

"But women's minds are so delightfully complex!"

"Pah, nonsense! I'll wager that you, despite your statement, do not find them so difficult to understand."

"Well, no, now that you mention it," Kuno laughed.

"Of course not. You yourself have too much a feminine mind."

"Pardon?"

"I mean that as a compliment," explained the Professor. "I have great admiration for the feminine mind."

Kuno bowed.

"That is, of course, outside of science," the

Professor went on. "No; the feminine mind is not complex nor is it as variable as the male tries to pretend. That is all a myth created by lesser men to excuse their inability to cope with the female manner of thought. They also say women are unreasonable. Again—nonsense!

"Women reason the best way, with their instincts. Because of this they think clearly and quickly, almost like animals. If they have an object—which, alas, is too often a man—they go to it, directly, without faltering. Men with an object—which is always, ultimately, a woman—approach it by *Himmel* knows what devious paths; by what a chain of untruths which deceive no one but themselves. Women are wonderfully primitive. That is why, with even the finest, one finds the savage so close to the surface."

"You read them like a book," said Kuno.

"That sounds too important," replied the Professor. "Let us say, instead, like a primer."

"As simple as the A-B-C's," suggested Kuno.

"Precisely," smiled the Professor.

He went back to his coffee. The stout *Kuchen* had been brought to the table. He held this over

his cup and dribbled coffee on it with a spoon. This was a habit of his with pastry, which he selected for its absorbent qualities. He was engaged in this meticulous *tunking*—sometimes called *tunching*—when Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhrl, walked on to the terrace and toward their table. . . .

The Professor didn't see her at first. He didn't even look up until Kuno arose to greet her. Then he saw her all at once. It was an experience for anyone to see the Baroness von Schweinsöhrl all at once for the first time. He stood, his sopping *Kuchen* in one hand, his spoon and napkin in the other, as Kuno introduced him. He still stood, and stared, as the Baroness and Kuno seated themselves.

"I hope I'm not intruding," the Baroness said prettily.

She smiled at the Professor. Under the gentle impact, his knees gave out and he settled vaguely into his chair. Kuno noted the trance-like movement.

"You are early, Mitzl," he said to the Baroness.

"Our engagement was half-past four," she said.

"But it's not yet five," Kuno said.

"Sorry," said the Baroness. "Shall I leave?"

"P-please, n-no," said the Professor.

"You arrived at the proper moment, Mitzl," Kuno told her. "Professor Volk and I were discussing the mental processes of women."

"It must've been exhausting," she responded. "May I have a *Kümmel* and *Kirschwasser*?"

"By all means. And it wasn't exhausting. Not at all. Simple as A-B-C's, eh, Professor?"

The Professor made a sound. He was tongue-tied.

"Heavens!" said the Baroness. "In the presence of such an authority—or should I say: two such authorities?—I feel absolutely unclothed."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Kuno.

"P-p-please," murmured the Professor.

He never, during that first meeting, became much more coherent than this. He was miserably happy. He wanted only to sit there, half-numb in her presence, feasting his bewildered senses on her blonde beauty, her lapis eyes, her delightful voice, her perfume . . . yet he knew that he should leave. These two entrancing

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young people, he managed to remind himself, had an engagement.

"If you will p-please excuse," he said, "I must . . . that is, I have . . . I hope, s-some day we will . . . I mean, meet again . . ."

His stumbling words sounded to him like the sinister proposal of a clumsy roué. He steadied himself and blurted.

"I l-like you—the both of you . . . be- because neither of you has any inhibitions. *Auf W-w-wiedersehn* . . ."

He scurried away in a panic of emotions. The Graf Adelhorst and the Baroness von Schweinsöhrl watched the rout of the Professor. Their smiles turned toward each other.

VI

"Now whatever did he mean by that?" asked the Baroness.

"We have witnessed a rare thing," said Kuno thoughtfully, "the noted psychiatrist galloping off on his own psychosis."

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"You sound remarkably scientific and unintelligible."

"Not at all. It is very simple; as simple as the A-B-C's."

"Please enlighten me, master."

"It may not be as simple as all that."

"Don't be unpleasant, darling."

"We have observed, to put it in words of practically one syllable, the triumph of the subconscious persisting through ages of hypothetical civilisation and super-culture, clamouring for primitive flight from peril."

"Thank you; that makes it quite clear."

"It is nothing. We of the neo-modern school hold clarity a prime requisite."

"You are an apt pupil."

"Am I not? Will you have another *Kümmel*?"

"With *Kirschwasser*. And tell me, doctor, what did the Professor mean about our lack of inhibitions?"

"Merely that we are not the slaves of convention; that we do not measure our antics by the rules of prescribed behaviour, in brief, that we do whatever we think will be pleasant."

"What a frightfully immoral thing for him to say."

"It's his way of making a compliment," Kuno assured her. "And, everything considered, it's rather a fair diagnosis."

The waiter brought *Kümmel* and removed the Professor's cold, unfinished coffee and the sodden remains of the *Kuchen*. In the silence of this operation, Kuno and the Baroness smiled. The ironic manner that was their habit together was not reflected in their eyes. When the waiter left:

"Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhrl," said Kuno. "I come to you, as humbly as my high rank permits and in accordance with the ancient custom of our proud old families, with an honourable proposal of marriage."

"Kuno, Graf Adelhorst," she replied, "the highly born Baroness Marie is as thrilled as one of her lofty station may become, but, before the heralds announce with trumpets this exalted troth, there is one question: Can we afford it?"

"We can't afford anything else, *hochgeborne* ladyship."

"But her Ladyship," the Baroness put forth,

"is aware of the fact that the Excellenz, Graf Adelhorst, is worse than bankrupt, and her own dowry would consist of dressmakers' bills, a tiara at present in a pawn-shop and a pair of mended stockings."

"If the Baroness von Schweinsöhl," remarked Kuno, "will be so gracious as to shut her aristocratic mouth, I will explain."

"I am gracious, Excellenz."

"The Graf Adelhorst," said Kuno, "does not offer his anointed self in matrimony—he offers Professor Ernst Volk."

The Baroness laughed ungaily.

"What a disappointment," she said. "For a small, charming moment I thought you were serious."

"I am, Mitzl; most serious."

"But not the comical Professor."

"Did you see the way he looked at you?"

"I am not unused to men looking that way."

"Are you not," said Kuno. "Yet there is a difference with Professor Volk."

"Sorry; I didn't notice it."

"Professor Volk has much to recommend him."

"I'm afraid I'm not too impressed by his fame or his vast learning."

"Fame? Learning? Did I mention either of these? What I wish to tell you, my dear Baroness, is that Professor Volk is a very wealthy man."

"Wealthy?"

"Fairly crawling with it."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

"Ah, now we have the direct, clear thinking of women."

"What's that you say?"

"Another of the Professor's compliments. You have to get used to them."

"I wonder if I could."

"You'd better. He said that I was feminine."

"Quaint," said the Baroness.

"No; only feminine."

"You, Kuno? Feminine?"

"Thank you, dear Mitzl."

He glanced at where his wrist-watch would have been had it not been in pawn. The Baroness offered her own wrist. He held it and looked at her watch.

"It seems to me," he said, after a moment or

two, "that we had some sort of an engagement to dine."

"The usual sort," she answered. "An invitation to the Hotel Birstlo to parade our impoverished snobbery for the tourist trade."

"Then, by all means, let us get dressed."

"You are so eager to display the Adelhorst charm to the bourgeoisie?"

"What a peculiar, old-fashioned term," said Kuno. "The Excellenz, however, is eager for a square, bourgeois meal."

"And my betrothal?"

"We'll speak of that on the way."

They arose from the tiny table.

"Perhaps I'm a bit afraid," she said, "of a man who knows so much about a woman's mind."

"Meaning the Professor?" he asked. "You are familiar, I fancy, with the fable of the cobbler's children and the fact that they never have shoes? Well, dear Mitzl, the great psychiatrist will have no time to psycho-analyse his own emotions . . . or yours . . ."

They sauntered from the terrace, a handsome, delightful and unscrupulous pair.

VII

It was true about the cobbler's children. . . .

Professor Volk reached his apartment at twilight. He still was in a pleasant daze. Dimly he ascribed his uneasy elation to the vernal weather and the unusual meeting with two lovely young persons. He even contrived a regret that the incident on the terrace, however enjoyable, had delayed some writing on the book he had in preparation. Recollection of the book, accompanied by the thought of the imbecilic psychiatrist who had challenged his pen and who must be demolished, brought back his characteristic appearance of the absorbed scientist.

Visaged in this manner, he confronted Fräulein Vera in the ante-room she occupied adjoining his study. She looked at once for the work of Herr Schmidt.

"You remembered!" she said.

"Of course I remembered. What?"

"Your beard; to have it trimmed."

"Certainly." He scowled. "You will please not persist in considering me as a helpless lack-wit, incapable of tying his own shoe-laces, no matter what satisfaction you derive from such an hallucination; no matter how important it makes you feel."

"No, no," she said. "It is only that it is so becoming, neatly trimmed."

"Becoming? Pah, nonsense!"

"I have even thought," she went on timidly, "Please forgive me: I have thought it would be nicer if you shaved it all off——"

She faltered under his frown and stammered:

"It would m-make you look y-younger——"

"And why should I wish to look younger than I am?"

"I only thought——"

"You only thought. . . . Pah! You mean: if only you thought. Shall I tell you what you really thought?"

"P-please——"

She meant: please not; but the Professor went on:

"You were indulging in fancies forbidden by our agreement. You have let spring make you

forget my warning. You are, in short, translating the morbid affection of which I cured you to my own person. I forbid it. You understand?"

"But no, Professor."

"But yes, Fräulein Vera. And now it is best that you go home and rest. You must be tired after the arduous labour of reminding the feeble-minded Volk to have his beard barbered."

Before she could protest again, the Professor had gone into his study. He closed the door behind him. He stood waiting, just beyond the door, listening to the minor sounds of her departure. When she left the ante-room he went, tip-toe, to the window of the study to watch her leave the apartment and start down the *strasse*. He grinned and, quickly, drew over the window three separate curtains which hung there, triply excluding the dying light of the day. He extinguished all the lights in the room except one that burned low on his desk.

Professor Volk crossed the room to a long, narrow ledge built, chest-high, under his bookshelves. On this ledge were nineteen life-size heads, cast in bronze and stained with acid to

a pale, dull green. These were the portraits of nineteen notorious criminals, who had been executed or chained in madhouse cells for the murders inspired by their several and unique manias. They would have been the delight of a wayward phrenologist as they would have been the fortune of a wax-works entrepreneur. For these were no ordinary fiends who had won verdigris immortality in the study of Professor Volk. Mere eccentricity in homicide was not enough for such distinction. An instance of this was Petra Vorrishé, whose honest, simple features peered with a puzzled look from the shadow. Petra Vorrishé, a skilled taxidermist, had slain his favourite uncle, Moscha Vorrishé, a prosperous jobber of sausage-casings. That was not sufficient to engage more than the passing interest of Professor Volk; nor yet was the fact that Petra had stuffed and mounted his plump uncle in a remarkably life-like pose, even to the butt of a cigar held in Moscha's fingers and the bit of ash on his vest. The police and the Press had been properly baffled at an apparent lack of motive, coupled with the affection known to have existed between Petra and

Moscha Vorrishé. Petra had made no claim to his uncle's considerable estate, to which he was sole heir. The police refused, and rightly, Petra's explanation that he had become weary of plying his skill on dead boars and antlered stags and deceased pet poodles. They felt, correctly, that Petra was concealing his real reason. Three days of persuasion, the details of which the police would have been the first to deny, brought out the facts.

Petra, confronted by his life-like victim, had a moment of rapture.

"Beautiful! Is it not beautiful!" he exclaimed. "It is more than art. It is the expression of love."

Then came the truth: Petra had committed taxidermy on his uncle to preserve him in the prime of his life, the passing of which had been a source of great concern to Moscha. Such logic had won the attention of Professor Volk and a place in his green bronze gallery.

Professor Volk patted the metal head of Petra Vorrishé as he passed, absently. He moved directly to a spot slightly left of the centre of the shelf. There the face of a woman smiled mischievously up at him. The Professor grinned

back, as if the two of them shared a secret which, indeed, they did.

It was a handsome head, vivacious even in this frozen-eyed medium. It was the likeness of Saritza Michaelis, twenty-seven, spinster and poetess. It was morally certain that she had disposed of seven victims, girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. It was difficult to prove these crimes, inasmuch as the corpus delicti was absent in each case, except the last. This was accounted for by the poetess's inclination for cannibalism. She might never have been caught had she not been interrupted, entirely by chance, at one unlovely meal-time in her dainty apartment. Her slender book of verse, *Viols, Vials and Violets*, thereafter went into a second and a third edition, autographed, but it was generally considered among the intelligentsia that her lasting fame would be secured less by her poetry than by her appetite. These critics were vindicated by time.

Professor Volk, less absently than with Petra Vorrishe, patted the head of Saritza Michaelis. Then, tenderly, he moved the bronze likeness. Where it had stood, his fingers felt for a minute

panel, invisibly matched to the grain of the wood in which it was set. He slid the panel back. In the tiny recess it had concealed was a slim key. The Professor took the key. Carefully he replaced the panel and covered it again with the bronze Saritza. He stood for a moment, his glance going stealthily to the three-curtained window, to the door of the ante-room. He took a deep breath and moved toward the wall opposite the window and toward a door not distinguishable in the mellow wood panelling of the room.

VIII

PROFESSOR VOLK softly turned the key in the lock and slid the panelled door back. He reached into the room and clicked a switch. The doorway became an oblong of light against the dark of his study. In this oblong he was silhouetted fantastically as he moved silently into the room. The door slid shut behind him. He locked it and, with a sigh, faced the room.

"Lilith," he said softly.

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This was the sanctum sanctorum, his retreat and shelter from the world. It was like a secret compartment in his own brain. Here he was safe from prying, malicious eyes and from inane tongues. Here he might loose to its utmost that brilliance too blinding for ordinary sight; where he might bare himself utterly; reveal all the subtleties of his mind and his work which the world must never know. And it was here that he wrote his tremendous books, including the one that was to win him the Nobel award that year.

"Lilith," he breathed again. "I have returned to you, my Lilith."

He spoke to the figure seated at the end of his long writing-table, at the rim of soft light cast by a lamp. It was not a thoroughly life-like figure, despite the realistic folds of its feminine apparel, the elaborate coiffure and the careful posture. Lilith, in fact, was a window figure of the old tradition. She had been installed in the secret chamber long before the makers of dummies had achieved such realism that finally, grown decadent, they had followed the so-categorized modern style with the making of

models cubistic, futuristic, impressionistic and all the rest. Yet, in the half-reflected light, Lilith seemed real enough. And more so as Professor Volk went up to the figure, lifted one of the stiffly-jointed arms and patted the waxen hand.

"Ah, dear my Lilith," he said. "You and I are the fortunate ones, who have our life in the only world worth living in: the world of the mind. And I am especially the fortunate one, because I have you."

As he spoke, he put on a worn dressing-robe. He picked up one of the long quill-pens and a knife from the table. He sharpened the quill point as he went on:

"We are not troubled, yes, Lilith, because it is spring? There are no violent emotions to disturb our perfect companionship; no petty bickerings between our minds. We live! It is the others who are the—pardon me, my Lilith—the dummies; lifeless figures walking about equipped with a faulty and preposterous mechanism called mentality."

He pointed the quill painstakingly, scraping down a roughened edge.

"And, secure in your unfailing sympathy," he

continued, "I can work in peace. And what work there is to-night, Lilith. To-night we shall demolish the ridiculous hypothesis of that superficialist, Herr Doctor Herman Ganzfeder. Charlatan!"

He warmed to the thought.

"I shall demonstrate clearly that what is called sadism is a dual part of masochism, although such dumb-heads as Ganzfeder believe them as far apart as the two Poles . . . ah, there's a phrase! I must not forget it . . . original thought deserves an original method of expression . . . what was it now? Ah, yes: as far apart as the two Poles . . ."

He went to his chair and wrote down the phrase in all its freshness.

"I shall show," he declared, "that what has been fallaciously termed sadism is really a projected and tenuous form of masochism and vice versa; and not only vice versa, but—ach, you smile, Lilith. I tell you: in the place of Ganzfeder's imbecilic hypothesis I shall inscribe the true doctrine establishing beyond dispute the obvious correlation of the sadi-masochistic impulses. You still smile? You shall see."

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He pulled fresh sheets of paper toward him, dipped the sharp quill in ink and began to write. Of course, the theory outlined by the Professor is old psychiatric stuff now. But at the time it was sensational. It caused as much dignified confusion as when paleontologists discover that the fossil saurian giant they have been using to measure eons has had its spine put on hind-end-to by the bone assembling department and that they'll have to revise their first oracularities by two glacial periods. . . .

Professor Volk's pen scratched a few lines and stopped. He frowned at what he had written, crumpled the sheet and tossed it aside. He began again, paused and put down his pen.

"This is strange, Lilith," he said, "that I, who certainly never permit myself to be at the mercy of a mood, should find myself disinclined to write, especially on such a subject. Do you fancy that, intuitively, I am reacting to some unguessed mood of yours? Come, come, dear Lilith. We must have no feminine brooding to disturb our idyll. Surely spring has not touched you, Lilith. Nonsense. Perhaps you prefer that we chat a while, no? You find me amiable, my

dear. Of what shall we speak? Maybe you would be amused if I recited for you a small adventure I had this afternoon. . . .”

He began to narrate his meeting with Graf Kuno and his admiration for the worldly charm of the Adelhorst. He repeated, chuckling, the pleasant discussion under the terrace trees and even mentioned the excellence of the *Kaffee-kuchen* he had saturated. And then, beginning hesitantly, came the apparition of Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhlrl. There returned some of the awe and bewilderment that had paralysed him when he first saw the radiant vision. The same pulsing emotion, only now he was articulate, to the point of rhapsody. He became vaguely conscious of his own exalted words . . .

“Perhaps I should not tell you these things about another woman,” he interrupted himself, smiling bashfully. “But I know you will not be jealous. What is that? You are jealous? No, dear Lilith, you must not give way to such an unworthy emotion. That is not the way I look upon Mitzl. That’s her pet name: Mitzl. Lovely, is it not? I do not look upon her as a man looks upon a woman. Surely you know I would not

do such a thing. Impossible! She is a creature of another world, living in the luminous half-light in which the gods live. She is a goddess, made only to be worshipped. . . .”

Professor Volk did not demolish the hypothesis of Dr. Herman Ganzfeder that night. He talked long to Lilith of the divinity whose pet name was Mitzl. Until at last, exhausted by his words and by his emotions, he fell asleep with his head on the orderly, unwritten sheets of the manuscript. On his face, sleeping, was an ecstatic smile.

Lilith stared.

IX

GRAF KUNO and the Baroness Marie had rooms, discreetly apart but on the same corridor, in the Hotel Doppeladler across the river. In their separate rooms, they performed the magic with their veteran wardrobes which would enable them to appear at the free dinner in the fashionable hotel on the far side of the bridge.

Not that the Hotel Doppeladler was without

its fashionable side. On the contrary. Its register was scrolled with the most distinguished names in all Austria. It bore names that had been old before the beginning of the Crusades; names that were woven into the tapestry of history and stamped with the choicest heraldic designs; names that had made Empire and courtesans and had unmade the Empire again. Names, not to prance along for ever about it, that were recognised and honoured everywhere save in the lower right-hand corner of a bank cheque.

That is to say, the Doppeladler had become the roost of those moulting birds of the old aristocracy, pried from their gilt and downy nests by post-war politics. How they lived from day to day was a mystery to themselves until the day after that. They did it, though, and, on the whole, they did it with an air. It was nothing at all, if one were *persona grata*, to meet in the lobby a prince who would tolerantly accept a cigarette, the offer of which he had suggested. Or a *distingué* chap with a ribbon in his button-hole who would discuss, in a properly blasé manner, the immediate prospect of reopening the vast ducal estates as a prelude to the

temporary loan of ten *groschen*. Or a fine lady who

In all, a charming hostelry, unless one had the misfortune to own it. And even Herr Berghof, proprietor of the Doppeladler, succumbed bitterly to the *noblesse* of his patrons toward his second-rate service and their own arrears. He had attempted to be firm in the matter of encouraging tourists, to which they objected coldly. When he persisted, they assembled in the lobby and dining-room and subjected the intruders to such a haughty lorgnetting and monocling that the tourists fled with their travellers' cheques and their budgeted but welcome tips.

Thereafter there was truce, but at night Herr Berghof grumbled to his wife of the tumbril and the snick of the guillotine. He even hinted at membership in the Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern. The Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern ostensibly was a social organisation. In reality, it was a band of shopkeepers and artisans pledged to political violence. Already it had perpetrated several demonstrations, chiefly rather jolly rough-and-tumbles with the police.

These scuffles were recorded in the Press as student riots, and next year would be celebrated severally as Black Wednesday, the Bloody Sixteenth and Red Monday. Its members wore red stars (*Rothen-Stern*) sewed under the left lapels of their jackets and had a pass-word ("Hoch Meyer," for one of the *Bund* who had been martyred by ten days in jail) for their secret councils.

Graf Kuno, with a gum eraser and a stick of chalk, cleaned his best dress-collar and whistled reflectively as he put it on. He reversed the white tie and gave it just the suggestion of a twist, to save it from the banality of perfection. A final adjustment of his impeccably tailored evening coat and he stepped down the corridor to the room of the Baroness von Schweinsöhr.

He performed a quick, trick rap on the door and entered. The Baroness wore an evening gown of shell-white and blue that complemented the lapis of her eyes. She sat, bent over, one slim leg crossing the other. She had flawless, smooth knees. She was attempting to mend a rip one of her stockings had developed in that vicinity.

"Sorry, Excellenz," said the Baroness, "but a woman's morale is no stronger than its weakest stocking."

"Why bother with it? After all, the tear is in a place that wouldn't be seen ordinarily."

"But, my dear," said the Baroness, "we do go to such extraordinary affairs."

"Do we not?"

Kuno went to her dressing-table, idly, and found the rouge-tipped end of a cigarette.

"With your permission," he said formally, and lit the cigarette with a crested lighter on the end of his trouser pocket chain. "You have given some thought, I trust, to your forthcoming marriage to Professor Ernst Volk?"

"It's too utterly fantastic, Kuno."

"On the contrary, it's the most sensible notion we've had in months. You must realise, Mitzl, that my feelings toward you in this project are definitely avuncular."

"My dear, please," said the Baroness, looking up in reproof from her mending.

"Avuncular," he responded sternly, "means, in the manner of an uncle."

"Oh."

"Let us be serious."

"By all means. But I'm not sure about the avuncular attitude. I already have an avuncle—I mean I have an uncle . . ."

"Don't be flippant."

"My great-uncle, Pishka, the Baron von Tirpvogel——"

"A most improper person."

"Exactly my point. At present, I'm sure, Pishka's in the tap-room, where he has established an amazing credit. Do you suppose he'd stand us a cocktail?"

"No; the Baron von Tirpvogel is very severe about that sort of thing. Besides, there'll be cocktails, free, at the Birstlo."

"But you appreciate my aversion to the avuncular view-point?"

"The difficulty with uncles," Kuno told her, "is that they are not avuncular. Which returns us to my original statement. What I mean is, I feel toward you a great sense of responsibility, as a proper uncle should feel toward his niece. That attitude includes the desire to have you decently and securely married."

"What of you and me?" she asked him.

"Apply to our situation, please," he said, "some of that instinctive, clear thinking so admired in women by Professor Volk . . . and by me."

"I have, Kuno . . . it's been lovely."

"It's been very foolish."

"But lovely," she insisted.

"Lovely," admitted Kuno, "and foolish. See here, Mitzl: let's be sensible about this. Mind you, I don't regret one moment of our . . . our friendship . . ."

She had bent far over to bite off the thread at her silken knee. From this position, the blue eyes regarded him, quizzically, ironically.

"It is merely unfortunate," he went on, quickly under that look, "a sheer waste of talent. Both of us, despite the exalted position that once was ours—or, perhaps, because of it—are admirably equipped for the life into which we have been thrown. Let us be fair about it: we are both young, handsome, charming, and, most admirable of all, we haven't a conscience between us."

The Baroness stood up and straightened her gown. Kuno helped her with her cloak, kissing

her bare shoulder as he did. She took the cigarette-end, down to its gilt end, from him and inhaled gratefully.

"And what's happened?" he demanded. "*I* fall in love with *you*. I, who should be elsewhere fascinating females who can afford the luxury; who should be restoring the Adelhorst fortune with some adroit love-making—I spend all my time with *you*. I tell you: I'd be ashamed to look my ancestors in the face."

"Fortunate, isn't it," said the Baroness, "that you've pawned the family portraits?"

"Tin-types done in oils," he said.

She was applying a last, needless touch of rouge. He insisted on finishing:

"And you, who might so easily attain a luxurious alliance; who owe it to yourself to acquire what is rightly yours: ease, millions, yachts, motors, modistes, Biarritz, emeralds—you waste all your time with me. Both of us, instead of demanding the fortunes that should be ours, are contented when we have a few *schillings* to dine in some beer-garden or to spend an evening in the Prater amusement park."

She moved toward the door.

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"Are you ready, Uncle?" she asked.

"Are you?" he countered.

"Quite," she said. "There's only one thing: again, granting that I become the Frau Professor Volk, what of you and me?"

"I was coming to that," said Kuno. "Let's go to dinner."

They went out, smiling formally, a very good looking, heartless pair.

.

Lilith stared as Professor Volk slept, blissfully smiling.

X

FRAULEIN VERA drew back the triple curtains, letting the mid-morning light into the study, gradually, like a private dawn. Another spring day, singing with its secret elation. Fräulein Vera was thoughtful, a trifle worried. She looked toward the panel entrance to the inner chamber and sighed.

Professor Volk entered crisply from his living

quarters. He was completely Volk, the aloof scientist. There was not a hint of the mood in which he had dismissed her the evening before. He spoke his morning greeting as if it were an uninteresting diagnosis. Fräulein Vera had prepared, as usual, a calendar of the day's engagements. He looked over the list.

"Ach, that weekly examination at the Clinic," he said. "That will be dreary."

"The Clinic telephoned especially," she reported, "to inform you that they are to examine a suspect in the Holzbruck murder mystery."

The Professor snorted.

"Mystery? Nonsense! Where is the mystery? The police merely have a corpse for which they cannot account. Is a corpse mysterious? Pah! This happens to be the corpse of a young and beautiful woman, and so the necrophilia of the Press is excited. But there is no mystery—except in the brain of the man who provided the corpse."

Fräulein Vera, who enjoyed this sort of excitement in the Professor, tried to look scolded.

"Anything else?" asked the Professor.

"A young man to see you," she said, and

handed him a card. He did not look at it at once. He was more interested in her apparent distaste.

"And you do not approve of him?"

"In my country," she said, "we are no longer impressed by moth-eaten titles."

"I doubt it," said the Professor. "And so my visitor has a title? Would you be so good as to tell me what it is?"

She indicated the card, which he still held in his hand. He glanced at it.

"Kuno, Graf Adelhorst!" he cried. "Show him in, Vera, at once . . . quickly! . . . no, never mind . . . I will do it myself. . . ."

He rushed to the door of the ante-room. Fräulein Vera watched with incredulous disapproval as the Professor, her idol, fawned before the Graf Adelhorst, ushered him flutteringly into the study, took his hat, offered him a chair. Kuno's pleasant smile did not allay her disapproval. As she left them together, Fräulein Vera said:

"Remember, you have a lecture at the University in half an hour."

"Of course, I remember," said the Professor,

and, as she closed the door, added: "Remind me in half an hour."

"Your young lady," remarked Kuno, "does not care for me."

"She is Russian," said the Professor, as if that explained everything.

"Ah, Russian," murmured Kuno, as if he understood.

And he really did, but not as the Professor meant. Kuno had grasped immediately the fierce, hidden worship of this strangely attractive young woman for the scientist. He realised that, instinctively, she sensed a threat in his visit. He knew, further, what Fräulein Vera, for all her jealous intuition, could not know: that the Professor's exuberance was not for him, but a reflected symptom of the Professor's emotion for the Baroness. Kuno smiled again. Such an enmity as Fräulein Vera's might make the game more interesting. The Professor was all too simple. Too much like shooting a duck on the sit.

Kuno looked around the study, evincing a curiosity quite consistent with a first visit. He was startled, though, when his sidewise glance

encountered the nineteen pairs of bronze eyes that stared from the Professor's gallery.

"Patients?" he inquired.

"Most of them," said the Professor, "have passed under my observation."

"This one?" asked Kuno. "She looks as if she might have been a very intriguing companion."

"She was. Her name was Saritza Michaelis . . ."

And Professor Volk recited briefly the history of the spinster poetess. He did the same for Petra Vorrishé and one or two others of his collection. He did not speak curtly, as he would have spoken to an ordinary visitor, but fondly, deprecating his own profound knowledge of such phenomena; displaying it as if it existed only for the amusement of his new friend.

"How much more satisfactory they are," said Kuno, "than the usual gallery of one's forefathers."

"Precisely," the Professor answered. "And they are, so to speak, family portraits."

"I'm afraid I don't exactly follow."

"We are all related to these persons; to

Saritza, to good old Petra, and the others. All one big family. We have inherited from thousands of generations of ancestors, the quite normal traits that placed these individuals in bronze."

"Normal?"

"Some day we shall speak of the names men devise in the pitiful effort to conceal their own ignorance from themselves. We might begin by asking: What is normal? . . . But another day for that. As to my ancestral gallery, as you have called it, let me say only that there lurks in all of us the thing that persuaded these men and women to what is known as crime in the nomenclature of humans.

"It lurks there and needs only some little twist of thought, some release, to set it in action. I have selected these types not for the apparently unique nature of their deeds. Contrarily, I pledge you my scientific faith—or, rather, my scientific scepticism, which is of more importance—that I have chosen these because they are, in my judgment, so thoroughly what is called normal."

Kuno was enthralled by the profundity of

the Professor in his scientific person as he was delighted with his naïveté out of it. It was, in the end, Kuno who did the psycho-analysing that morning. . . .

The ingenuousness of the Professor revealed itself shamelessly when, finally, he asked after the Baroness. He faltered over her name as he had faltered in her presence. And he listened with rapture to Kuno's adroit commonplaces concerning her. He even blushed, or came as close to it as a practising psychiatrist may, when Kuno spoke of the great pleasure the Baroness had in meeting him and her desire to see him again.

"Ach, that is too kind of her," said the Professor. "To say which, as well as to say that she is entrancing, is to admit the feebleness of the language or one's inability to employ it properly. . . . Graf Adelhorst, permit me, you are a very fortunate young man."

"I?" queried Kuno. "Ah, I see what you mean. But you are mistaken, Professor Volk."

"You are not, then, engaged to the Baroness? . . . excuse me, please . . . I merely thought . . ."

Kuno measured the quick exultation.

"Alas, no." He succeeded in a half sigh. "If circumstances were other than they are—but why speak of that? With the Baroness and me . . . it is only that our families were friendly in the old days before the war and Marie and I have continued that friendship in these days of lesser fortune."

Professor Volk was sympathetic and breathlessly happy. Wherefore, his resistance was not of the stoutest when Kuno suggested that some evening soon the Professor leave his work and join them in an outing. Kuno, with regard for his emaciated purse, spoke of an evening in the Prater; a tavern in the woods, perhaps a visit to the amusement park. The Professor was dismayed.

"Would she go to such places?" he asked.

"As a lark," said Kuno. "In fact, the Baroness suggested it herself. She thought that it might be a great relief for you, instead of seeing people only as patients, to observe them at play."

"How clever she is," breathed the Professor.

"Is she not," said Kuno. "You will go?"

"I shall be delighted. Only you must allow

me, Graf, to be the host . . . please . . .”

Kuno was trying to be reluctant toward this suggestion when Fräulein Vera reappeared in the doorway.

“It is time for the University,” she announced.

“Ach, what a nuisance!” the Professor exclaimed. Then, excitedly, to Vera: “Please send to the bank and get me some money . . . a good deal of money . . .”

Fräulein Vera looked suspiciously at the pleasant young Graf, who rewarded her with one of his most fetching smiles.

XI

WILLI ZIMMERKOPF sat grinning before the three serious-faced men in the Clinic examination-room. Willi Zimmerkopf, suspect in the spectacular Holzbruck murder mystery, was the prize fish in the psychopathic net that day, and he looked the part. He was a composite portrait of those case-histories in books strictly limited in sale to doctors and students of psycho-

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pathology: "M. LeG——; 43, unmarried, railroad clerk of Vrgliz, Ukrania; indication of cranium progeneum; emphysema; suffers occasional attacks of depression . . ."

Willi Zimmerkopf was under-sized and runty, but he had long, slim hands. His pale eyes were not exactly crossed, but they didn't seem to focus quite on the spot to which they were directed. His grin was ingratiating, sly and idiotic.

"Look at him," said Inspector Schnorrheim just before the examination.

"Why did you arrest him?" asked Professor Volk.

"My men found him at the place where the murder was done, in Holzbruck-strasse."

Professor Volk clucked and shook his head.

"You mean, of course, the scene of the crime," he said. "You amaze me, Schnorrheim. I understand, naturally, why the police foster such propaganda and how, occasionally, some criminal is led by it to return to the scene. But that a man of your experience . . . were you there yourself, Max? . . . don't tell me, Max, that you were . . ."

Inspector Max Schnorrheim hung his head as

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the Professor spoke. He lifted it again defiantly. It was a half-hearted defiance.

"Yes, I was in disguise," he said. "As an itinerant Alsatian peddler. All right, laugh. Do you think I enjoy such masquerades? Gluing on false whiskers and wearing dark glasses? I've got to do it, for morale, for the good of the service. What would my detectives say if their chief never appeared in disguise? And, besides, this time we caught him."

Through the open door to the examination-room, he indicated Willi Zimmerkopf, seated, grinning, waiting for the inquisition.

"I wouldn't bring him here at all," he said, "except that it is required by regulations. I'd be willing to put him on trial at once. We'd find him guilty merely on his looks."

"It would be a disturbing precedent," said the Professor, as he went into the examination-room. He and Inspector Schnorrheim each had their moments of regret that ethics insisted on a mutual scorn. They were really quite fond of each other.

It seemed a sorry frittering away of professional skill for the three alienists to devote them-

selves even for an hour to the discovery of what was wrong with Willi Zimmerkopf. Seated on one side of Professor Volk, the presiding authority, was Dr. Hugo Herbst. On the other side sat Dr. Franz Schlager, an eminent alienist, but old-fashioned to the point of decorating his dignity with pince-nez worn at the end of a wide, black ribbon. Willi Zimmerkopf was impressed and pleased by the array of talent assembled to contemplate his case.

"I am honoured, gentlemen," said Willi, "but I must warn you that the police give much too flattering credit to my villainy. I promise you, though, that I will respond to your tests as unintelligently as possible."

Dr. Herbst and Dr. Schlager stared. Dr. Herbst muttered something which may be translated only as:

"Wise man?"

Willi added brightly:

"Who knows? It may turn out to be very amusing for all of us."

Drs. Herbst and Schlager were already convinced of his mania, and went through the routine of questions only to classify it. Dr.

Herbst did most of the questioning. Professor Volk listened in his characteristically aloof manner. Dr. Schlager was a trifle distrait. Mrs. Schlager, the evening before, had chanced on a paper which he had addressed to the Wien Institute, setting forth the advantages of the purely mental aspect in the relation between men and women. Mrs. Schlager had been vastly and volubly diverted with the findings of her husband. She illuminated them with what, apparently, she considered humorous high-lights of her own research into the subject. Dr. Schlager twiddled with his pince-nez.

The ocular diagnosis of Willi Zimmerkopf's condition seemed to be confirmed by his responses. Drs. Herbst and Schlager awaited only some sign from their superior to judge him mentally unbalanced and turn him back to the police or into an asylum. Even Willi began to be bored.

"Come, come, gentlemen," he said, "we are getting nowhere. It must be quite obvious that I could not have committed the Holzbruck murder, much as I may admire the engagingly atrocious technique with which it was executed.

On the other hand, it must be equally obvious that my potential qualities as a maniac deserve more consideration than this scientific pitter-patter in which you have been indulging."

Dr. Schlager aroused himself and pinched his glasses to the bridge of his nose, cleared his throat and fumbled for a question.

"What is your occupation?" asked Dr. Schlager.

"Fancy waiting so long to ask that," said Willi. "It should have been one of the first questions."

"Answer, please," said Dr. Herbst.

"I am a maker of wax figures," said Willi. "A creator of images known in the vulgate of commerce as dummies."

"Wax figures?" The Professor spoke for the first time.

"And such wax figures!" exclaimed Willi Zimmerkopf. "The most exquisite, ravishing, life-like dummies in all Vienna; in all Europe—in all the world! Pardon my emotion, gentlemen. It is that of an artist, justly proud of his work."

"Ah, an artist," said Dr. Schlager.

"I realise," replied Willi, "that it is the ultimate confession."

Dr. Herbst and Dr. Schlager shook their heads at each other gravely, and made ready to shake them in trio with Professor Volk. They turned to him, awaiting the certain verdict.

"Of course, gentlemen," said Professor Volk, "the case before us is quite obvious."

"Of course," said Dr. Herbst.

"Quite," said Dr. Schlager.

"This man," said the Professor, "is entirely sane."

Dr. Herbst grunted his astonishment. Dr. Schlager's pince-nez dropped from his nose to the length of their black ribbon.

"I deny that!" cried Zimmerkopf.

"Already you have talked too much," the Professor reproved him sharply. To his colleagues he said:

"It is understood, gentlemen, that you may file a dissenting report if you disagree with my conclusion in this matter. But I am sure, as the senior member of this commission, that I will be allowed to assume responsibility for the freeing of this man."

"Of course," said Dr. Herbst.

"Quite," said Dr. Schlager.

"Just the same," said Willi Zimmerkopf, "I decline to give up the cherished illusion that I am a competent lunatic."

"Perhaps you also would like to file a report," said Professor Volk.

Willi Zimmerkopf grinned.

XII

THEY dined together one star-graced night in a cosy tavern set among the trees of the Prater, close by the road that leads to the race-course. They dined: Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhrl, Graf Kuno Adelhorst and Professor Volk. The Baroness, in the sylvan setting, was more than ever a fragrant; elusive nymph. A nymph, it must be added, with a mortal and healthy appetite. In the presence of this sprite, the Professor worshipped in rapt silence or in stammering fragments of sentences. His meal might have been prepared by the pet cook of Lucullus or it might have been saw-dust with an uninspired

sauce. Professor Volk would never know. Kuno, a faun-like figure to match the beauty of the nymph, watched the Professor's mounting emotion with the air of a connoisseur. It was a very pleasant meal for Kuno, although he had decided, as a matter of policy, to pay for it.

Kuno attempted to coax the Professor to talk about himself and his work in an effort to place him at ease. But there was no ease for a man in the cool and delightful delirium which enveloped the Professor. The redoubtable Volk, who could hold a class-room spellbound, to whose utterances the whole scientific world would listen, could do nothing but babble incoherencies. And all to the lilt of a Viennese waltz that a stringed orchestra was playing somewhere among the trees.

The Professor, still delirious and incoherent, was freshly timorous when Kuno led the way toward the giddily lighted and noisy amusement park. Determined to shake the Professor out of his coma, Kuno hustled him on a harum-scarum coaster-ride. The Professor was immune to all other sensations when Kuno placed him next to the Baroness; strapped him there, in fact. Such

was the nature of the ride.

It was not alone the screaming dash of the coaster flight that threw the Baroness with such soft violence against the Professor. Nor was the Schweinsöhrl valour, practically unsmirched since the Middle Ages, to be doubted in the way she clung to his arm. The Professor returned dizzily to earth.

They halted before a booth where perspiring merry-makers were hurling croquet balls at a backdrop decorated with plates, saucers, cups, all manner of crockery.

"Interesting," said the Professor, "that, even in their hours of play, human beings are still moved by the mania for destruction."

"Fun, though," said Kuno. "I, for one, think there's altogether too much constructive work going on in the world."

He picked up a croquet ball and, with deliberate vigour, hurled it crashing through a roast-platter.

"Every time, as the British say, a coconut," said Kuno, with quiet satisfaction. "Try your hand at it?"

"Should I?"

"By all means. Release the primitive urge. Banish the lurking inhibition."

"In that case," said the Professor.

He took a ball, timidly, and shied it wide of the almost unmissable targets. His second chipped a soup-tureen. But the third, thrown in despairing shame, smashed a coffee-pot gloriously to bits.

"Coconut!" cried the Professor.

There was the light of triumph in his glance at the Baroness.

"Bravo!" she called.

He reached for another ball. Ten minutes later he had destroyed enough crockery to furnish a large, hungry family and still was at it. The Professor had become a jousting knight, breaking dishes instead of lances for his lady fair.

It made him daring. Daring enough, at any rate, to suggest that they all have their pictures taken by an automatic photographing machine.

"I have not had my picture taken for years," he said, by way of excuse.

It was true. He had denied himself even to the seeking lens of the press. He went first into

the cabinet, where one sat on a stool, dropped a coin in the slot and stared at the single, searching eye of the machine. Kuno and the Baroness stood a short distance away.

"Is this," she asked, "some unlooked-for demonstration of the Narcissus complex?"

"Don't be dense," said Kuno. "It is too apparent that our subject is using guile to obtain a photograph of you."

"Ah, fetish-worship," the Baroness decided.

"Bright," commented Kuno. "But he simply wants your photograph."

"These machines take such horrid pictures," she objected mildly.

"Spare your vanity. He'd worship your likeness if it was carved in butter by a post-impressionist chef."

"You have great faith in my charms, Excellenz."

"And why not?"

Much has been written and, likely as not, shall be written hereafter of the beauty of the Baroness. It might be sufficient to set down, instead, that the faultless contour of the Schweinsöhrl features, survived even the ordeal

of the auto-photo cabinet. The Professor's transparent wiles failed him when he wished to obtain possession of the portrait. In the end, she virtually had to force it on him:

"Please accept it, as a remembrance of this evening's outing."

"I could never forget it," he answered.

If they'd had any shame, it would have made itself felt as they watched him tuck the precious picture in his wallet and place it in his breast-pocket.

Shamelessly still, they concluded the evening with a drive through the Prater. Kuno ordered the driver to go slowly. He wished the Professor to observe the relation of men and women outside the bindings of text-books; beyond the intricate realm of the mind in which the Professor ordinarily made his observations. The wooded Prater made a graphic field for such research. On park benches, on lawns, under the shelter of shrubs and trees—everywhere beneath the stars and the moon that had conspired to join them—were couples engaged in the ritual of spring. Professor Volk was being confronted with the facts of life.

"Is it always like this?" he inquired.

"Invariably," replied Kuno.

"Especially in spring," added the Baroness.

"But it is marvellous!" exclaimed the Professor. "No false modesty. No stupid repressions . . . as naturally and as decently as woodland animals!"

He seemed to emerge from a reverie.

"Forgive me," he said. "I forget I am not in my classroom."

"There's no need to apologise," said the Baroness, graciously, "for the frank expression of love."

"You mean it?" he asked, eagerly. "But naturally you do . . . you are w-wonderful."

He collapsed again into inarticulacy, completely entranced by the way the evening had gone. So was Kuno.

XIII

RAIN stroked the grey stone walls of Willi Zimmerkopf's studio. It was a peak-roofed

cottage in a thinly-populated district at the edge of the city. It was snug behind a tall hedge, clipped with geometrical precision. At each side of a vermillion door, which bore a shiny copper knocker of a design known in that Alexandrian garden dedicated to Aphrodite-Astarte, stood a tree. The two trees were slender, with smooth, black trunks that looked metallic in the rain, and with scrawny, empty limbs. The sills of the windows were higher than a man's head.

Through the wet windows an even, grey light, filtered into the high room that was Willi Zimmerkopf's work-chamber. There, in fantastic seclusion, Willi lived and laboured among the inanimate creatures of his craft. There was a litter of plaster, wax, bales of false hair, moulds, glue-pots, pantagraphs, calipers and all the other materials and tools of his calling. Detached arms and legs hung on the walls. A tray of artificial eyes stared from a handy tabouret. A lonely head grimaced like a wistful Medusa at the tip of a modelling staff. The rain whispered gossip on the roof and along the windows.

All in all, Professor Volk found it very com-

fortable, a gratifying refuge from the shower which had overtaken him on his first visit. He had forgotten his rubbers, an oversight which would be bothering Fräulein Vera at the moment much more than it bothered him. She did not even know where he was, a fact which would bother her even more.

Usually, Willi did his best work to the sound of the rain chattering along the eaves. He had been annoyed at the crunch of footsteps on the path and the sound of the Alexandrian knocker. His annoyance dissolved in delight as he recognised the Professor. He abandoned the witches' potion he'd been brewing on a pot-bellied iron stove, cleared a stout table—of a bearded mask, a paraffin fist clutching a dagger, two grinning sets of teeth and a handful of ears among other things—and brought from a cupboard wine, hard sausage and rye-bread.

"The unsuccessful suspect of the infamous Holzbruck murder," he chuckled, "welcomes his betrayer."

"You betrayed yourself," the Professor charged, with a chuckle of his own. "You talk too much."

"An amiable failing of mine," admitted Willi. "Yet your colleagues were deceived."

"My colleagues—pah!"

"Pah, indeed. But why were you so sure that I didn't murder that girl in Holzbruckstrasse?"

"Your guilt or innocence did not interest me. I was required only to pass on your sanity."

"It was disheartening," said Willi.

"Besides, you could never have done it. It was altogether too messy a job."

"True," said Willi, ruefully. "I would have to be neat about a murder."

"You are an artist."

And they talked about that, cheerily, gnawing at the hard sausage, dipping bread in the wine. The Professor asked for a spoon.

"As a young painter," said Willi, "I was misled by somebody's epigram about the function of art being to improve upon Nature. Not misled, exactly, but over-excited by the importance of the function. After all, it is not difficult to improve on Nature. I improved too well. I do not exaggerate, sir, when I say that my work was recognised at once as that of genius."

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Willi paused to watch the Professor carefully saturating his chunk of bread.

"I would like some one to define genius," said the Professor.

"In a phrase," responded Willi, "genius is Zimmerkopf."

"I ask for a definition and you give me a symptom."

"Then may I ask for a diagnosis?"

"You are so sure of your dementia that you should not need my endorsement."

"It seems much simpler," sighed Willi, "to gain recognition as an artist than as a maniac."

"The requirements are much more precise. Go on, about your career."

"Where was I?"

"You had just been acclaimed a genius."

"Worse than that," said Willi, "I was successful. My paintings were the sensation of exhibitions in which they appeared. They sold. Art dealers infested my studio. Dilettantes made collections of my most casual sketches. Orders came from America. And I became bored."

"I believe you," said the Professor.

"Why shouldn't you?"

“Nothing can be more enervating than success.”

“It wasn’t merely success,” Willi argued. “In fact, it was rather fun being lionised, having money, good clothes, comfortable quarters; being made much of by women.”

“Ach, the art appreciation of women! it is a disguise made of gauze, to hide their physical desires.”

“You’re telling me,” said Willi.

“That is an American expression.”

“One of them was an American,” said Willi. “It wasn’t my material success that bored me. It was the ease with which I accomplished my ambition: to improve on Nature. Finally, I abandoned my career and began to search for a path back to Nature; a medium through which I could compete with Nature; be Nature herself. I have found that path and that medium.”

His gesture took in the room, proudly. The Professor pushed aside his wine glass.

“It is because you are an artist,” he said, “that I am here.”

“I cherish the tribute,” said Willi, “although

I'd kind of hoped you'd come in the interests of science."

"After a fashion I did."

"How may I serve you?"

The Professor reached into his breast-pocket, drew out his wallet and from it took the auto-photo of Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhrl. He did this with such a fond and furtive air that Willi was aroused from the gentle despondency that had begun to claim him.

"I wish you to model a wax figure from this," he said; and explained, too hastily: "I wish it to use as part of my class-work; a sort of anatomical figure."

Willi's grin had returned.

"Why do you sit there, leering at me?" the Professor demanded.

"It is my unfortunate habit," said Willi, apologetically, "to seem to be leering when I am most interested."

"The figure," said the Professor, "is to be for anatomical study."

Willi leered further.

"Yet I wish it created of the finest material

you have . . . and your most inspired work as an artist."

"She is very beautiful," commented Willi, examining the photograph.

"She is exquisite," murmured the Professor. "Divine!"

"But this shows only her head and shoulders. What am I to do for the figure?"

"For her figure," said the Professor, "produce the most faultless shape your genius can evoke. Imagine what Helen of Troy must have been like and you will have a beginning. Bring to your recollection the warm contours of the Venus de Milo—and excel them. Add to these the poetic concept of Sappho, the regal exoticism of Cleopatra, the splendour of the goddess Ashtoreth. . . ."

Willi nodded at each appalling item, as if he were a clerk checking a routine inventory. It was close to nightfall when the Professor left, sloshing rubberless through the rain-puddles. Willi stood in the vermillion doorway and grinned, looking very much the idiot he had looked that day in the Clinic.

XIV

THE proprietor of the terraced café was very tactful about it. The Graf Adelhorst had owed him a solid sum for many months. Of course, in happier times he would have ignored the matter. But, then, in those times it never would have come up. These were unpleasant days when every *Schilling* counted. The Graf understood. If the Graf could only find it possible to pay some trifle on account. . . .

Kuno listened with sympathetic distaste to the wheedling of the café owner.

"To be sure, I understand, Herr Schwanz," he said. "And I appreciate your patience."

He reached into his pocket and inspected the assortment of small coins he produced. The dawning smile of Herr Schwanz faded.

"However," continued Kuno, "I shall have to ask you to be patient a while longer. At the moment I am carrying only enough for my immediate needs."

"Surely the Graf appreciates——"

“It grieves me,” said Kuno, “that there should be the difference of a few *Groschen* between us. When I think of how many times you and I have grown sad together over a bottle of wine and over the passing of the old, glorious days; the splendid days when the nobility were real lords on their own estates; when they lived in castles alive with music and laughter and love; rode in carriages of state behind prancing white horses; when they tossed purses of gold to a happy, loyal peasantry—ah, Herr Schwanz, where is that ancient loyalty?”

The sentimental oratory had reduced Herr Schwanz to apology and almost to tears. He controlled himself.

“And where,” he asked, “are those purses of gold?”

“You become difficult, Herr Schwanz.”

“If you could only—a little something on account, Excellenz.”

Kuno felt that the skirmish was won. He was inclined to be gracious in the old Adelhorst fashion.

“A little on account?” he said. “No, Herr Schwanz. Was an Adelhorst ever a *pfennig*—

pinching miser. A little on account, indeed. You shall have it all, at once, every *Groschen*, every *Schilling* . . .”

“But when, Excellenz?”

“But soon, Herr Schwanz.” Kuno allowed his manner to become chummily confidential. “Very soon, in fact. Will you let me confide a great secret? Within a month, Herr Schwanz, maybe even sooner, I come into a fortune in a way entirely honourable to the code of the Adelhorsts. When I do you shall be reminded how an Adelhorst pays his debts. You may be even a little ashamed that you have bothered one about such insignificant sums as you mention.”

“I am ashamed now, Excellenz.”

“Say no more about it,” said Kuno. “Meanwhile, it is a credit to your café, is it not, that I bring here such illustrious personages as the Baroness von Schweinsöhrl and the great Professor Volk?”

“You have been gracious,” Herr Schwanz mumbled.

“Then be gracious in turn. Why not send to the table where I entertain the Baroness a bottle of my favourite Schloss Johannisberger? And

we shall drink, the Baroness and I, to the renewal of my fortune—and the payment of my debts.”

He strolled toward the terrace. Herr Schwanz watched him, struggling with emotions, fingering his left lapel, under which was sewed the red symbol of the Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern.

“Hoch Meyer!” he whispered, darkly.

Kuno joined the Baroness on the terrace. It was delightful to witness the smile they had for each other; their attitude of unpossessive ownership.

“I’ve been chatting with Herr Schwanz,” he remarked.

“How unpleasant,” said the Baroness. “Am I good for a *Kümmel* and *Kirschwasser*?”

“Rather. My credit’s improved immensely.”

“Please don’t be mysterious, darling.”

“It is high time,” he said, “that we wrest a proposal of marriage from Professor Volk.”

“I’ll try again. He’s difficult, you know.”

“I’ve practically promised Herr Schwanz.”

“Oh, in that case I’ll use my utmost charm on the Professor.”

"He's charmed already. In fact, he's mad about you to a degree where only he could explain it psychologically."

"If he ever starts thinking——"

"He's past that and you know it."

"That's the trouble. He's reached the point where he only looks and blushes and gurgles. He can't even talk any more. It's somewhat wearing, really, Kuno. I'm just a shade weary of being looked upon as a goddess."

"Brace up, Mitzl, old girl. Remember: even goddesses mingled with mortals."

"Not with Professor Volk they didn't."

"You're funkling the proposal then?"

"It's not that; I'm merely baffled."

Kuno sighed.

"Ah, well," he said, "I suppose I'll have to see to it myself."

"I wish you would."

The waiter came to the table, bearing a bottle tenderly.

"Schloss Johannisberger, 1921," he announced. "The compliments of Herr Schwanz."

The Baroness sent her lapis glance to Kuno, who met it innocently, as the wine was poured.

They raised their glasses.

“You’re right,” said the Baroness. “We simply must consider Herr Schwanz.”

XV

PROFESSOR VOLK declared his love, passionately and coherently, and with it made his proposal of marriage. . . .

Lilith was no more. One night, in the long shadows of his secret chamber, the Professor destroyed the figure that had been the collaborator in his greatest work; his confidante and his companion. It was under the steadfast glass eyes of Lilith that he had composed the hefty volume that singled him out for the Nobel award. What came later came too late. Professor Volk nerved himself for the sacrifice. Lilith represented his past and he felt something shameful in the days that had been before the resplendent apparition of the Baroness. No cold hand from other days must reach out to touch the new life. He muttered these things to Lilith

as he crushed the unrealistic face, dismembered the jointed body and fed it to the fireplace, which furnished the sole, flickering light for the strange scene.

This was after Willi Zimmerkopf, wearing his idiot grin and the soiled clothes of a workman, had delivered a long, wooden box to the Volk apartment. It was marked: Books. Professor Volk had told Fräulein Vera that he expected the delivery of a box of books, Perhaps she would have suspected nothing had it not been for that idiotic look of Willi's.

"It's books," said Willi. "See, it says on the side, plainly: Books."

At her order, he lugged it into the study. He grinned again as he looked at the Professor's bronze gallery.

"Splendid!" said Willi. "But lacking the true touch; the life-giving touch of the artist."

Fräulein Vera was surprised at this criticism from a plaster-powdered workman; and moved to crush it.

"They are casts," she said, "made from the subjects while alive."

"That accounts for it," declared Willi.

"Stupid copies of Nature executed with no sympathy for the intent of Nature. Mere likenesses."

"Is that all?" asked Fräulein Vera.

"That's enough," answered Willi. "It's too much. It's——"

He remembered his workman rôle.

"Yes, Fräulein, that's all," he said. "Just the box—of books."

He repeated it from the doorway:

"Books. Just books."

And, with a farewell leer, he left.

Fräulein Vera was uneasy with curiosity. She returned to the box, which had the dimensions of a stingy coffin. She walked around it, touched it, lifted one end. She even stooped to sniff it.

Her growing suspicion was interrupted by a telegram from Stockholm, which she opened as part of her duties. Shortly afterward the Professor himself entered. Fräulein Vera, with the telegram, met him in the ante-room.

"It has arrived?" he demanded at once.

"Oh, Professor Volk?" she cried. "It is so wonderful!"

"What is that? What is so wonderful?"

"This telegram, from Sweden——"

"Pah, a Swedish telegram!"

"But, Professor, such a telegram. It's from your friend, Dr. Sauerlauf, and it says there is a definite report that you are to receive the Nobel prize!"

"Pah, the Nobel prize!"

"It means——"

"It means what? Fame? Already I am famous. Is their prize going to improve my research? Is it going to add to the intelligence of my writings? Pah!"

As he emitted the final pah he reached the door of his study and saw the wooden box.

"Ach it *has* arrived! Why didn't you tell me at once?"

"The t-telegram——"

"Nonsense! This is the important thing. This . . . that is: these books."

"It doesn't seem heavy enough for books."

The Professor eyed her, sardonically.

"Yes? Not heavy enough, yes, for books? And what does the clever Fräulein Vera suspect I am concealing in this box? A corpse, maybe?"

You have become hysterical, Fräulein, reading the accounts of these so-mysterious murders. Like the exciting and so-mysterious Holzbruck case. . . .”

“I only said it seemed light for books. . . .”

She was startled at his mood. He came toward her, confronting her with the second leer she had encountered that evening. It upset her, but she was thrilled as, strangely, he put his hand on her shoulder.

“You must not imagine things, dear Vera,” he said. “It is unworthy of so essentially clever a student of the mind . . . and you must not be too curious. Remember, no, what happened to the wives of Herr Bluebeard? You are overtired, Vera, I am afraid . . . best go home and rest. . . .”

She didn’t want to leave, but, with that peculiar air of mocking concern, he insisted. . . .

The Professor locked the study door as soon as she had gone. He went to the window, softly and swiftly, and drew the three curtains. On the first of them the bare branches of a tree in the street below were stencilled like grotesque,

groping fingers by the light of the street-lamp. The second curtain blurred the shadows. The third obliterated them. The Professor sighed and moved across his darkened study toward the bronze likeness of Saritza Michaelis. He slid back the secret door and stood silhouetted in the oblong of soft light. Then, with a tender urgency, he dragged into the chamber the wooden box, marked: Books. The chamber door slid shut and was locked.

Inside the chamber, the Professor brought out a chisel and a hammer. The wooden handle of the chisel was padded with cotton, wrapped securely with bandage linen. The head of the hammer was similarly muffled. With these tools, very carefully, the Professor pried off the lid of the wooden box. Very carefully, with only a final squer-r-reak as the last nail stubbornly held to its purpose, he swung back the lid.

At first, there was visible only a rose-cloud of satin, exquisitely quilted. It might have been the coverlet of a queen; a young queen, not yet too regal for amour. Its very colour was fragrant. Under it was a veil of black lace, a texture so finely spun it challenged the craftsmanship of

the spider. And, at last, fragile folds of creamy silk. Red and black and white, the colours of love and death and purity, as demanded in the ritual of Oriental bridal garments—though in a different order: black, white and red—had been the fancy of Willi Zimmerkopf.

The Professor, in ecstasy, drew back the ultimate, silken fold and gasped. Under his trembling hands lay the waxen likeness of the Baroness Marie. Willi Zimmerkopf had made good his artist boast. The figure was breathlessly life-like, to the curve of the delicate eyebrows; the faint colour along the cheek; the proud, humorous turn of lips; even the rise of bosom through the Paquin gown which Willi, with a stout purse behind him, had purchased. . . .

To Professor Volk it was life, without the inarticulate fever that came in her actual presence. Reverently, awed, he lifted the figure from its royal wrapping and placed it in the chair that Lilith had occupied. It was not close enough to his own. He moved it. He disposed the figure in one of the graceful postures he remembered all too well. He sat for a long time, transfigured, gazing at the beautiful form, re-

peating her familiar name like a poem. At last, with fingers that shook, he dared touch the hand.

"Ah, Mitzl, Mitzl," he murmured. "Now I may call you that, no? And now I may come close to you, touch you even, without quaking like a schoolboy . . . now I can speak, without the words tangling in my throat . . . now you are not a distant, cool goddess—you are mine! With you by my side, adored one, I will perform miracles of labour. You shall be my courage, my Mitzl, and my strength . . . for you I will reveal the marvels of my mind, which in the other life you view only with disdain . . . the other life? . . . there is no other life . . . here, in this chamber, is real life . . . here we shall really live, Mitzl, you and I. . . ."

He went to his knees beside the figure. Timorously, his lips sought the hand, cleverly adorned with a chaste ring bearing the Schweinitz crest: a taloned falcon, a lily and the tusked head of a boar, couchant.

"I love you, Mitzl," he said. "And I have wanted you so terribly. You do not utterly despise me, do you, Mitzl? You permit me to kiss your lovely hand . . . some day you will

give me your lips? . . . do not say: 'no,' my loved one . . . and one day we will be married; one day when you come to really know your Ernst; not a cold scientist, weary with the endless insanities of men and women, gibbering in the loneliness of their hopeless existence—but your lover, Mitzl; your Ernst who wants only this life with you, alone in a world he has created for you. . . .”

The features of the Baroness looked down with kind contempt on her abject lover. . . .

XVI

PROFESSOR VOLK might have been satisfied with that proposal of marriage and no other. The Graf Adelhorst was not, although he knew nothing of it. He was mindful of his obligations to Herr Schwanz, and a score of other creditors who leaned perilously toward the revolutionary theories of the Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern. There was, primarily, his avuncular interest in the married future of the Baroness. There was

also, it must be admitted, the humorous aspect of the situation that had developed from his whimsical thought that afternoon in Herr Schmidt's barber shop.

Kuno decided to call upon the Professor. Once more he passed through Fräulein Vera's barrier of hate to the welcome of the mighty alienist. Kuno explained his visit by saying that he wondered what had become of the Professor; why he no longer dropped in at the Schwanz café for coffee and a quiet chat.

"Not only have I missed you," said Kuno, "but the Baroness. . . ."

The Professor beamed, blushed and stammered. Kuno considered these symptoms and went on:

"You know, speaking as man to man, old boy, I've even gone so far as to think the Baroness may be—well, to say the least, very favourably inclined toward you."

The Professor wriggled in his chair.

"Ach, my dear Kuno."

"Why not? True, she is a Schweinsöhl, with all that that implies. One naturally thinks of her as mated only to one of the nobility. . . ."

"N-naturally . . ."

"Yet there are many of the nobility and there is only one Professor Volk. Such achievement as yours, Professor, is superior to the requirements of birth and breeding. What is more, it must appeal to the innate culture of such a woman as the Baroness . . ."

The Professor attempted a modest argument.

"I am only surprised," said Kuno, "that, as a man of the world, you haven't noticed it yourself."

"I am not a man of the world, Kuno. You know that. I am only, for such a one as the Baroness, a dry-as-dust professor."

"Yet you are aware of the mental processes of women: like a primer. A-B-C's. . . ."

"Do not chide me, Kuno."

"I'm not. And, believe me, I'm not treating the situation lightly. The Baroness would never forgive me. Can it be, Ernst, my friend, that your own, ah, feeling for the Baroness has dulled your professional vision; blinded you to symptoms of love you would otherwise diagnose at a glance?"

"You overwhelm me."

"Why not speak to the Baroness? Learn the answer from her own lips?"

"She is so marvellous. Divine. Like a goddess!"

"Even goddesses mingled with——" Kuno remembered having said this on another occasion. "That is, what I mean to say: you'll find the Baroness human enough. The important thing is to speak to her, tell her how it is—to propose, in a word, marriage."

"Ach, Kuno, I could never do that. You must have noticed how I am unable to function reasonably in her presence; how I grow tongue-tied, stutter——"

He began to stutter. Slowly, an idea. . . . He leaned across the table, boyishly eager.

"You are my friend, no, Kuno? And you will do a great favour for me? Promise you will not laugh at what I am going to ask. Please, Kuno. . . ."

Kuno bent toward him. The Professor, blushing, began to speak. . . .

.

Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhrl, sat by the long window of her room which opened on a balcony overlooking the beautiful blue Danube. It wasn't beautiful to the Baroness. In fact, sending another grudging look in its direction, she decided that it wasn't even blue. The Baroness, in *négligée*, was once more repairing her evening gown, the tattered uniform of her rank, and stitching a mild, unwonted melancholy into the failing *passanterie*. She remembered, with an old dislike, the convent school in which she had been taught needlework. Her ambition, at that stage of her existence, had been to become a construction engineer and go to America and fight the Indians and finally become the dance-hall favourite of cowboys, miners and remittance-men. Her announcement of this intention had upset the Schweinsöhrl household considerably. Her proud old father, who boasted that he never laid a finger on one of his children in punishment, ordered her governess to apply the cane. The melancholy of the Baroness lifted a little as she remembered how she had taken the cane away from the governess and had beaten her over the head with it.

There was a familiar step in the hallway and a familiar quick rap at the door. Kuno came into the room and bowed.

"I have come, Ladyship," he announced, "on the wings of love."

"At this hour, Excellenz? Why, it's not yet time for luncheon."

"You are coarse to a degree, Baroness. I am Cupid's own messenger; nay, Cupid himself. I have only the most honourable of motives."

"It doesn't sound very amusing, despite its novelty."

"I bear," he pronounced, gravely, "the bashful but honest proposal of marriage from Professor Ernst Volk."

"Don't mind me. I'm just doing a spot of mending."

"I've had a trying morning, my dear. Please try not to be flighty."

"It is what psycho-analysts recognise at once," she told him, "as an effort to conceal my own emotions. A defence mechanism, plus the female pretence of flight."

"You'd better not pretend."

"However did you manage?"

"I knew that sooner or later I'd have to take charge," said Kuno. "So this morning I bearded the meek but difficult lion in his lair."

"I must speak to him about that beard," put in the Baroness.

"You insist on being frivolous."

"I've never been more serious."

"Then you accept?"

"What a question. You don't mean to tell me that you haven't settled that, too?"

"Well, practically. That is: I allowed the Professor to feel a certain assurance."

"Nice of you to consult me at all."

"Is it not?"

"And the date for the wedding?"

"That is for you to decide, absolutely."

"Nice. Now, let me see. . . ."

"Any time within the next fortnight."

"So soon?"

"Remember Herr Schwanz."

"As if I'd forgotten."

"There remains, then, only one thing . . ."

"What can it be?"

"The betrothal kiss."

"By all means."

She arose as he stepped toward her.

"As proxy for the Professor," Kuno said.

The Baroness smiled. Kuno took her in his arms. It was a long kiss, longer even than a betrothal kiss should be.

XVII

FRAULEIN VERA answered the telephone. It was a call from Herr Schmidt, the barber. His voice sounded bothered. She listened, incredulously.

"Is it all right," asked Schmidt, "to shave off Professor Volk's whiskers?"

"You mean: *all* off?"

"Yes, Fräulein: *all* off?"

"One moment, please."

She closed her eyes, trying to imagine the Professor beardless. She remembered she had made the suggestion herself. She smiled.

"Yes, Herr Schmidt: all off." A thought wiped away her smile. "Is Professor Volk alone?"

"No, Fräulein. He came in with the Graf Adelhorst."

"Oh, I see."

"Pardon, Fräulein?"

"Shave him," said Vera.

She was thoughtful as she hung up the receiver. Thoughtful and worried. She had reason to be, certainly. But how much reason she could only begin to guess until the Professor arrived, whiskerless and radiant; flushed, despite the pallor on the newly-barbered sector of his face.

"Behold me, sans beard!" he cried, like a mischievous schoolboy. "You like this way, no?"

She was more amazed at his mood than at his unwhiskered features. He mistook this for disapproval.

"But you told me yourself," he said, "that I should have them shaved off . . . to make me look younger, you said. . . ."

"And do you remember what you said?"

"Not exactly, but I know I am always reasonable."

"You—you scolded me."

"Nonsense! I tell you: I am always reasonable."

"Who reasoned with you to-day?"

"Why, no one. I simply thought it would be better, so I dropped into Herr Schmidt's and had it shaved off."

"You weren't by any chance persuaded by the Graf Adelhorst?"

Professor Volk was surprised, but the true psychiatrist may not reveal such a weakness.

"Ach, the unerring intuition of a woman," said the Professor, "especially an angry woman."

"I'm not angry."

"I have noticed lately your habit of blaming Graf Adelhorst for whatever displeases you."

"I don't trust him."

"Not trust Kuno?"

"Oh, it's Kuno, eh? And I suppose he calls you Ernst; or is it Ernie?"

"We are like old friends, Kuno and I."

"If you don't need me any more this evening, I'll go."

"No. Please wait, Vera. There is . . . that is, I mean . . . I have some news for you."

She waited. The Professor laughed, nervously. He had been fearful of the moment when he must tell her of his wedding plan. Ever since

Kuno had brought him the message of the Baroness's acceptance, he had been hoping for some tactful occasion to inform Fräulein Vera. At the same time he had been evading the disclosure. Dazzled as he was with the prospect of marriage to the Baroness, despite Vera's agreement that she would not make him the object of her affection, he knew that her feeling for him was considerably beyond that an assistant may feel for her employer.

Fräulein Vera waited. He had chosen this unhappy moment to break the news. He had a desperate hope that the missing whiskers would be diversion enough to ease the shock. They didn't. Fräulein Vera stiffened as her idol, the god-like master of the human mind, babbled like a lovesick youth of the great event. At first she could not believe it. There came a feeling close to nausea as she was forced to realise the truth.

"Is it not wonderful, Vera? I tell you, a man of my position, my occupation, needs the quiet comfort of domesticity for a balance . . . he needs a wife."

"Tell me only one thing," she said in a strange, flat voice. "Is the Baroness von

Schweinsöhrl a friend of the Graf Adelhorst?"

"Why shouldn't she be? They both come from the ancient nobility; from fine old families."

"And maggots," she said, "come from fine, old cheeses."

"Please. Fräulein Vera. I know what you say comes from a disorder of emotions, which I understand. Yet I must remind you: you are speaking of the lady who is to become my wife."

She laughed, abruptly; a single syllable of hysteria. Then she blurted:

"Your wife. Hah! You don't need a wife, Professor Volk. What you need is a nurse. Not only that: you need a guardian, and I'm sure you'd have no difficulty having one appointed by the Clinic commission."

He blinked and smiled, foolishly, helplessly.

"You are not really angry, Vera?"

"Not angry . . . only sick at my stomach."

She stood in the doorway leading to her ante-room.

"Angry? Why should I be?" she cried. "I'm only your assistant. . . . I'm not in love with you!"

With which declaration, she slipped through

the doorway, dropped into her chair and began to weep, violently. Professor Volk stared at the closed door. Absently, he caressed the green, bronze head of Saritza Michaelis.

.

Die Wochenente, the smart weekly journal that devoted itself to gossip and scandals about what was left of Vienna's smart set, grew quite witty and libellous over the announcement. It made an involved joke about the Professor's new facial nudity, comparing it to the hair-cut Samson received from the first lady-barber of history. It even managed—*Himmel* knew how—to secure a beardless snapshot of the Professor. Other journals were more discreet, making much of the mating of the grand old Schweinsöhrl family, barely hinting that it was poverty-stricken, with the most illustrious man of science, scarcely indicating that he was almost as wealthy as illustrious. Students at the University had their little, awful jokes, regarding the approaching event as the final, professional eccentricity.

Colleagues of the Professor merely exchanged

looks or, at most, shrugs. They also saw pictures of the Baroness in the morning papers and glanced across the breakfast-table at wives too stout or too lean, who scolded at the folly of the at-least-middle-aged Professor's marriage to one so young and frivolous.

"However," said Mrs. Herbst, "there is plenty of money and that helps."

Dr. Herbst made a noise in his throat and bent over his coffee-cup.

Mrs. Schlager giggled.

"I hope, dear," she said to her husband, "that you have sent the Professor your paper; you know: that one in which you recommend the mental side of love."

"It's all in the mind," muttered Dr. Schlager.

"I shouldn't wonder," said his wife, and she giggled again.

There was a good deal of talk. The affair came up, with oratory, at a secret council—Hoch Meyer!—of the Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern. Herr Berghof told his wife that things might improve. Herr Schwanz rubbed his hands.

Kuno went into the tap-room of the

Doppeladler hotel. He ignored the defensive attitude of the barman and went at once to a corner table. There he found, decently in cognac, Pishka, Baron von Tirpvogel, great-uncle to the Baroness Marie.

"Afternoon, Kuno, m'boy," said Baron Pishka. "Sorry can't invite you join me. Credit arrangement with Berghof provides distinctly purchase no drinks for others. Sad state of affairs. But there it is."

"Don't talk like a telegram," said Kuno.

"Why not? Always been mark distinction. Peculiarity old aristocrat."

"I merely wish to inform you," said Kuno, "that you are to appear at the wedding."

"What wedding?"

"Haven't you heard about Mitzl?"

"Come to think, some bounder did mention. Professor, what? Mind-reader? Something?"

"You are to take the bride to the altar."

"Tush, lad. Wouldn't consider departing Berghof hospitality. Never liked Mitzl, anyway. Snippy child. Brat, in fact. . . ."

"You shall lead her to the altar."

"Tush. Won't hear of it. . . ."

"Everyone will be there."

"All more reason. . . ."

"Free drinks."

"Got credit here."

"Champagne."

"Gives me heartburn."

"Cognac."

"Free cognac?"

XVIII

BARON PISHKA VON TIRPVOGEL attended the wedding. He was plainly disappointed in the Professor, apparently having expected him to be robed as a medium and in a trance. Not that the Professor wasn't close to that state.

"Read tea-leaves?" he asked Kuno. "Poppycock. No truck that clairvoyant dodge."

The Baron, thereafter, partook so baronially of the marriage cup in advance that the bride had to lead him to the altar. He succeeded, stonily, in cutting dead three lesser patrons of the Doppeladler, the guests of which turned out

handsomely for the ceremony and the wedding-breakfast with champagne.

It was a quiet wedding, considering the prominence of both contracting parties. It took place in one of the smaller churches. Kuno was the best man. He supported the Professor at the altar as staunchly as the Baroness supported her grumbling great-uncle. Altogether, it was a successful and distinguished affair.

Immediately afterward, Kuno visited Herr Schwanz at the terrace café and, with the fine air of flinging largesse to the populace, paid his bill. He also settled that of the Baroness and was thoughtful enough to drop by the barber-shop of Herr Schmidt.

.

Professor Volk and the Baroness drove to the railroad station. The Professor had been alone with his wife for fifteen minutes. He was deliriously confused, incredulous still of the miracle that had made his goddess, this slim, unapproachable deity, his wife. The unaccustomed, practical bustle of the station further bewildered him. Vaguely, he felt the necessity

of making some intimate, festal gesture. A vendor of novelties, wheeling the cart on which his wares were spread, bumped into him. The Professor was inspired. He darted from the side of the Baroness to overtake the vendor. He returned with a Viennese version of a familiar toy, known in Austria as Micki Maus. It was of hand-carved wood, painted brightly, and it whistled, wagging its tail and head, when wound up. The Professor was delighted with it. The Baroness was startled in a well-mannered way at the gift, but, entirely gracious, accepted it.

Professor Volk's elation dissolved and he was again ill-at-ease in the orderly turmoil of the station: grim men in uniform demanding tickets, repeating cabalistically the numbers of compartments, coaches and tracks; porters darting in and out with luggage; the screaming of guard-whistles; the angry hiss of escaping steam; the thunder of rolling trains. . . .

The Professor, his tickets clutched damply in his hand, moved a step behind the Baroness, exerting himself to match her stride, in a state close to panic. He stopped and stared. Through a group of arriving passengers, strolling with the

pleasantly occupied air of a traveller bound on an agreeable journey, appeared Graf Adelhorst.

"Kuno!" called the Professor. "Look! It is Kuno!"

"So it is," responded the Baroness. "Come to see us off, no doubt. Nice of him, isn't it?"

It was nicer than that. When the Professor, and the Baroness, thanked him for taking the trouble to come to the station, Kuno waved aside their gratitude.

"I'm travelling myself," he said. "I feel the need of a holiday and I've decided to visit the Swiss Tyrol, climb a mountain or two and brush up on my yodelling."

"You yodel?" asked the Professor.

"As an amateur only," said Kuno.

"We also are going to the Swiss Tyrol," said the Professor. He examined his tickets. "To Schilzwalden."

"Then we must be on the same train."

They compared tickets. It was true. Kuno was booked on the same train, although in another coach.

"We will arrange that," said the Professor. "Oh, rather, you will arrange it. I'm afraid I

don't know how to manage such things. But we have two compartments. You must have one of them."

"But I go only to Pfaffer-am-Vildberg."

"Ach, nonsense! You must come with us to Schilzwalden. . . . No, no, you must. Mustn't he?"

"If it pleases you, Ernst," said the Baroness. "And, of course, if it pleases Kuno."

Kuno bowed, looking up at her.

"So you see, Kuno?" crowed the Professor. "And you will like Schilzwalden, I know. They say there is an excellent brandy there . . . made from little, wild plums. . . ."

"Ah, brandy from little, wild plums," Kuno smiled. "You tempt me too greatly, Ernst."

"Then you will come? . . . Wonderful! . . . Ach, this is perfect!"

And thus it came about that Kuno, Graf Adelhorst, accompanied Professor Volk and the Baroness on their honeymoon. It was not entirely the adroit coincidence, to be sure, with which writers of fiction, especially mystery fiction, attempt to prove that truth is stranger than their product. Kuno, as a matter of fact,

had arranged the train bookings for the honeymoon pair. His own ticket from the beginning had been stamped: To Schilzwalden. . . .

A shrilling of whistles, the shouts of conductors, the last moment churning of porters and passengers, cries of farewell and final embraces, laughter and quick tears. Through the turmoil, Kuno moved with veteran assurance. He held the Professor with one arm, the bridal Baroness with the other. The train tootled and clack-clacked out of the station. . . .

In a far corner of the platform, a dark and attractive young woman watched the departing train with tears in her Mongol eyes. Fräulein Vera, who had promised never to fall in love with the man she worshipped.

XIX

THE train for Schilzwalden and mountainous points beyond moved eagerly into the mystery of the night. Its driver, exhilarated by the iron flight toward the stars, spurred it roaring past

crossings and jerked the whistle-cord as it plunged into tunnels. The passengers were attempting to synchronise their lurching to the motion of the train and to ignore the banshee scream of the whistle, which shrieked of destruction. One by one, or two by two, as the case might amiably be, they were preparing to retire; to cheat with possible sleep the tedium of all railroad journeys, no matter how joyfully undertaken.

The porter in Coach 17, a plump fellow with red wrists and a curved blond moustache, made up the bed in the compartment occupied by Professor Volk and the Baroness. He lingered over his task, achieving mathematical exactness with the sheets, the pillows and the blanket. At last it was done. The porter signed sentimentally as he patted out a final, invisible wrinkle and, with a sympathetic grin for the Professor, backed to the door.

"Good night, *gnä' Herr*," he said. "A very good night."

The Professor once more was alone with his bride. He looked helplessly from the chill intimacy of those precise sheets to the Baroness.

She was very close to him, too close for a goddess to be. He was conscious of her warmth; the delicious aura of perfume that assailed his senses with her slightest movement. The lapis eyes of the Baroness returned his look. He smiled shyly. She was obviously waiting for something. He trembled.

"You haven't kissed me, Ernst," she said.

"Oh, y-yes, I have," said the Professor.
"Don't you remember? At the altar?"

"I mean you haven't kissed me."

It sounded enigmatic and relentless.

"M-may I? . . . ach, Baroness . . ."

"Marie," she corrected him. "You may."

"M-Marie . . ."

He moved toward her timidly, drawing back at an abrupt shove from the train as it swung around a bend. He lifted her hand, kissed it with dry lips, and sat back, confounded with his daring. He sighed. So did the Baroness.

"Shall we go to bed?" she asked.

"I g-guess we'd better," he said. "You should rest, no? To-morrow may be a busy day, what with arriving at Schilzwalden and all."

She examined this statement, seeking a trace

of Austrian humour, generally broad enough to be discerned readily. He meant it. He still sat there, adoring her. He smiled fondly, and after a while he spoke again.

"You know," he said, "I sort of miss Kuno."

She simply couldn't believe it, but managed to say:

"Yes, having Kuno along is going to be very convenient."

She waited again. So did the Professor.

"I suppose," she said, "I might as well start to undress."

"Undress? . . . But yes, of course; certainly . . . undress . . ."

The Baroness stood up and loosened the fastening at her throat. He gulped, terrified by the belief that she was going to undrobe herself on the spot. She deliberately encouraged his wild misapprehension before she reached to the luggage-rack for her night-bag.

"You should rest, too," she said. "Better get ready for bed."

She left him, stunned, and went into the wash-room which divided their compartment from that of its neighbour with the semi-privacy of

Continental travel. She latched the door behind her.

The Professor, alone in the compartment, stared at the wash-room door and tried to ignore the crazy beating of his heart. He glanced over his shoulder at the primly folded sheets and hastily looked out of the black window. The clack-clacking of the wheels conspired with the dissonance of his pulse. He must undress . . . undress-undress-clackety-clack-cl-lack-undress-cl-lack . . .

He started to rise, but allowed a jerk of the train to thrust him back into his seat. He stiffened with resolution.

"Pah, nonsense!" he whispered.

Reassured as by a battle-cry, he arose and lifted his bag from the luggage-rack. He opened it gingerly. He reached inside. He swayed toward the window and drew the shade. He returned to his bag and drew from it a pair of silk pyjamas, lavender with a small design of conventionalised flowers. He held them up and looked at them. They seemed unforgivably ribald. Kuno had selected them, though, so they must be proper for the occasion. Kuno knew

about such things, and Kuno was his friend. There was a dressing-robe, too, of deeper lavender with a sash ending in silken tassels. The Professor folded the pyjamas and the robe across the back of the compartment chair.

He glanced around, as if fearful of being caught in a vile act. Then, resolutely, he began to unbutton his coat. His fingers faltered at the buttons of his vest. The train was approaching a tunnel. The engineer joyfully reached for the whistle-cord. Scr-r-ee-eech! The whistle was like a wild hoot of derision. The Professor jumped and stood, breathing heavily. Quickly, despite his shaking fingers, he re-buttoned his vest and coat. He pounced upon the pyjamas and robe, thrust them back into the bag, locked it, and sank back in his seat, exhausted.

"Nonsense!" said the Professor weakly.

XX

MEANWHILE, on the other side of the wash-room door, the Baroness made brief work of disrobing. She performed deftly the feminine ritual of

cosmetics which some women can accomplish—and of which others make such a sorry mess—even in front of a streaked railroad train mirror. She surrendered her slim, lovely body to the caress of her night-dress, an exquisite creation of linen, sheer and edged with frail lace. Over it she drew the soft folds of a dressing-gown.

She turned to the door opposite the one by which she had entered. She knocked. A quick, trick knock. She opened the door without waiting for a response and stepped into the adjoining compartment.

Kuno smiled up at her. He was sitting, completely at ease, wrapped in a handsome robe from India. An illustrated sporting weekly was in his hand and two long drinks were on the miniature table at his elbow. He put down the journal and made a move as if to rise.

“Oh, sit down,” she said. “Don’t be polite to me. I’m worn out, being polited to. I simply can’t stand any more of it.”

“Nerves, eh?” said Kuno. “I can imagine, my dear . . .”

“But you can’t. You can’t, possibly . . .”

“Best have a taste of this.”

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He handed her one of the glasses and watched while she drank. When she put down the glass, he said:

"Fancy you having nerves on a night like this."

"I really ought to be shrieking with hysteria."

"Pull yourself together."

"I need to."

"But what is it? What's happened?"

"Nothing; that's just it."

"Nothing? This is serious. You mean: nothing?"

"He kissed my hand and blushed."

"For the Professor, of course, that's more or less brutal."

"And, oh yes, he said he missed you dreadfully."

"Poor chap," said Kuno. "It's not given to every man to embrace his dream."

"Rot!"

"You must be more considerate, my dear. It's really my fault. I should have had a long, serious talk with you about this. Naturally, he's nervous and upset. You must be tender with him. Above all, no violence. Remember, in

these first days alone you may cast a shadow over your whole married life."

The Baroness tasted the long drink again.

"You'd have made a wonderful mother," she said.

"It's that feminine streak in me, I fancy. Have another drink?"

"I must not inflame myself."

"That's the way I like to hear a bride talk."

"Just the same, Kuno, it's not very keen sport."

"As a matter of fact," Kuno replied, "I suppose it's really quite sad."

He sighed and dismissed it with a shrug.

"However, we must not grow sentimental," he said. "Especially on your honeymoon. I drink, Ladyship, to the baffled bride."

"Baffled, maybe, Excellenz," she responded, "but not beaten."

They drank, their eyes meeting over the crystal rim. . . .

The Professor sat alone in his compartment. Clack-clackety-cl-lack.

"Nonsense!" said the Professor.

He said it several times, seeking its familiar

comfort. He was less ill-at-ease when she was not so vitally close. He would be better prepared for her when she returned. Clack-clackety-cl-lack. The face of Micki Maus smirked at him. He picked up the friendly toy. Absently, he turned the key in its back. He set it on the window-sill. At once it began to whistle drolly, wagging its head and tail. The Professor was delighted. When it ran down, he wound it again.

He was so engrossed with its tiny antics that he did not hear the washroom latch drawn back. The Baroness entered, taking in the scene from the washroom doorway.

"Not ready for bed yet, Ernst?"

He jerked. The thumping sensation of panic returned with the Baroness. It increased at the sight of her, so fragile, so fragrant and so faintly attired. He scrambled to his feet, stupefied, stammering apologies.

"I was waiting for you to come back," he gasped desperately. "I was just s-sitting here, th-thinking. . . . If you'll excuse me, please . . . I'll—I'll step out in the corridor . . . for a smoke. A smoke, yes . . ."

And he rushed from the compartment. The Baroness stood, shaking her head. Micki Maus whistled and leered from the window-sill. She shrugged and, with the movement, slipped the soft dressing-gown from her shoulders. She stretched, drawing her body taut under its transparent covering. She shook her head again as she turned to the smooth-sheeted bed.

She was asleep long before the Professor returned from the corridor. He came into the compartment stealthily, and made his way to the seat by the window. He reached for Micki Maus, remembered its shrill piping, and dropped his hand. He sat with his head in his hand, his elbow on the sill. Clack-clackety-cl-lack. Still he sat, watching the sleeping form of his incredible bride . . . clack-cl-lack . . . except for short intervals when he dozed . . . cl-lack-cl-lack . . .

XXI

SCHILZWALDEN, high in the Swiss alps. The long, grotesque horns of the Tyrolean shepherds

sounded like priests' trumpets, calling the faithful to worship Divinity in the splendour of the alpine countryside. A lake that was like a fallen fragment of the sky it reflected. Over it reared the snow-crowned altar of the mountains. Before them were spread altar-cloths of vast meadows, tapestried with flowers after the decadently gay manner of Gustav Klimt in his precisely informal landscapes. A cool, scented breeze from the hills. Vistas that were lost in mists of lavender. A fair enough morning, it might be summed up, in the Swiss Tyrol.

Yet a paragraph of rapture may be excused. Poets have looked on Schilzwalden and have been reduced to the terms of railroad folders and tourist propaganda. Stout musicians of the Wagnerian school have taken one sniff of Schilzwalden air and turned in compositions for the flute, two piccolos and a muted violin. There was *Thin Incense*, the volume of verse written by Otho von Stadler, bitter laureate of the coffee-houses. Otho von Stadler had always written of futility and frustration, occasionally taking a sardonic rap at the government and treating women, versically, in a scathing manner.

When *Thin Incense* was published, in mauve covers, critics turned pale. In the coffee-houses it was gossiped that the Villon of Vienna—he'd been called that—was either achieving senility or had picked up at last with some troll. Not so. Otho von Stadler had merely gone away to avoid Frau von Stadler, whose conviction that poetry was but a loafer's escape from honest toil had begun to bore him. But he had gone to Schilzwalden!

The Schilzwalders lived picturesquely up to the landscapes in their cuckoo-clock houses and in their colourful Tyrolean costumes, folk-dances and other customs. They even yodelled. They did all this so whole-heartedly that they sometimes aroused the scepticism of tourists. Schilzwalden, though, was not too well known to the tourist tribe, a matter of regret to its tidy shop-keepers and one of congratulation among those who delighted in the unspoiled scene. Its taverns were in the old tradition; from them, at all decent hours of the day, came the sound of light-hearted music, largely on the zither.

The chief hotel, the Fünfjahrzeiten Gasthaus, combined a passable modernity of plumbing,

which included central heating of a sort, with an ancient architecture. Its service was self-consciously Swiss and excellent. One of its enjoyable features was a sloping lawn, where tables had been set under tall evergreens.

The Professor, the Baroness and Kuno sat at one of the tables, covered with a bright cloth of local weave, drinking the native brandy made from little wild plums.

"I told you, no, Kuno?" said the Professor. "It is good, no, this brandy?"

"I'm beginning to like it," replied Kuno. "The first five or six bottles, however, were a test for the unaccustomed palate."

"The old Adelhorst determination," breathed the Baroness. "You are worthy of your heritage, Excellenz."

"Am I not?" said Kuno. "Permit me to persevere further."

He reached for the bottle. The Professor was charmed with their bantering, petty talk and utterly outside of it. He tried, though. He was somewhat more at ease in the presence of the two persons he loved most and under their furtive stimulation.

"Ach, you two are always bickering," he laughed. "It is no wonder, when we first came here, that everyone thought you were the husband and wife. Comical, no?"

"Comical," said the Baroness.

"Another brandy?" asked Kuno.

The Professor was trying very hard to be gay. He had even dressed the part. In fact, the three of them had succumbed to the lure of the peasant costume. With the Baroness, this meant only the chic addition to her Parisian sports costume of a Schilzwalden shawl, worn as a scarf, and a shapely felt hat with a saucy cockade of hawk feathers.

Kuno and the Professor displayed no such reserve. They were completely alpine, from mountaineers' giddy bonnets with whisk-broom sprays of boar's bristles to heavy boots and bright woollen stockings that covered only their calves. Leather breeches, too, and broad, silver-studded belts. It was all begun as part of the holiday spirit. At first, the Professor had been reluctant about the masquerade. Kuno had laughed away his timidity.

"It will do you good," he said, "to forget for

a while that you are a dignified alienist; and to forget that there are such things as minds, including your own."

"You have right, Kuno," responded the Professor. "I will buy, I think, those braces with the embroidered violets and the bells on the breast-piece."

Kuno may have had a moment of doubt when he saw the Professor fully rigged out in the regalia of the Tyrol. Kuno himself was built for such garb, as he was for the uniform of a cavalry officer, the spangles of a bull-fighter or any other bravura costume. The Professor—well, the Professor just wasn't.

At any rate, they were merry enough with their wild-plum brandy under the evergreens; with the best zither virtuoso in all Schilzwalden agitating his implement in the tap-room behind them. A privileged peddler moved among the tables, with a tray full of souvenirs in carved wood.

"Ach, Micki Maus!" cried the Professor.

It was. This time Micki Maus was dressed as a mountain-climber with a coil of rope and an alpenstock. The Professor signalled excitedly

to the peddler. The Baroness remembered the toy that had leered at her in the compartment.

"Not another Micki, please," she said. Then, to soften the disappointment of both the Professor and the peddler, she became interested in the other carvings. "I'll take the little, pink-cheeked milkmaid with her pail and stool."

"We should visit the Schilzwalden co-operative dairy," said the Professor, as he concluded the transaction. "Maybe to-morrow, no?"

"No," replied Kuno. "To-morrow we become Tyroleans worthy of our disguises. To-morrow, if the lout, Lewi, who is to guide us, does not fail, we ascend Schrecklichberg."

"Mountain - climbing?" quavered the Professor.

"What else? And what a mountain!"

"Me?"

"No less. The three of us, and Karl, are to go yodelling over crag and precipice, astounding the chamois with our agility, plucking edelweiss from the cloudy heights."

"It will be splendid," said the Baroness, "and

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I promise I won't let Kuno yodel."

"An alp without a yodel may as well remain unscaled," said Kuno.

"Perhaps it would be better I didn't go," said the Professor.

"In view of such protest," said Kuno, "I will forego my song."

"It is not that, Kuno. But great heights always give me vertigo . . ."

"I'm afraid I've made it sound too heroic. Schrecklichberg is really a very mild sort of climb."

"I know it is ridiculous of me," said the Professor. "But perhaps it would be better if you and Marie went without me."

"If Ernst would be uncomfortable," began the Baroness.

"Wouldn't think of it," broke in Kuno. "If Ernst won't go, we'll visit the co-operative dairy."

"That'd be a pity," she said.

"But Ernst won't spoil our sport," he assured her. "Once he's started, he'll enjoy it. Besides, as I said, the trail's quite safe. There's really only one spot on it you might call bad—and

that's literally only a step; a place called the Goat's Foot."

The Professor grimaced at the suggestion of the name. Then he smiled bashfully.

"Anyway, I'll try," he said, and reached for his brandy-glass.

"That's the bully old boy," said Kuno. "To the Goat's Foot."

"To the Goat's Foot," answered the Professor.

XXII

THE start for the Goat's Foot was made before daybreak. There was coffee in the deserted tap-room. The Baroness contrived to be chic even at that hour and in the bulky habiliments of the practical mountain-climber. She joined Kuno in a small glass of wild-plum brandy with the second cup of coffee after he had debated the wisdom of such a course, his caution surrendering graciously at short last to the early morning chill. The Professor declined brandy, although he felt the need of it.

The lout, Lewi, waited under the cold stars. He was a giant of a man and he looked even larger with the coil of rope over his wide shoulder and a heavy rucksack on his back. He carried an alpenstock and a lantern. A porcelain-bowled pipe hung out from his whiskers. These draped to his collar-bone and were black. His eyes were blue and coldly contemplative. Lewi was the full-length portrait of the mountaineer; the stoic philosopher who had wrestled life's secrets from the eternal hills; who looked down from their heights, tolerantly silent and contemptuous, upon the petty doings of the world. That was Lewi. It remains only to be set down that he was quite aware of his rugged grandeur and fancied it more than a little.

It still was dark and chilly when they began the ascent, Lewi leading the way with his lantern. It was not a stiff climb, in its early stages. Even the Professor, unused to such exertion, was not too wearied by it. The Baroness and Kuno might have been out for a morning stroll. More than ever, in this Olympian setting, the Baroness was a sylvan deity. And more than ever, Kuno was the light-hoofed faun created to

escort such beauty. Together, mounting to the sky, they made the progress of Lewi, the native, appear heavy-footed and clumsy.

The sun was up as they approached the Goat's Foot. It raised its brass shield over the ramparts of Schrecklichberg and the mountains moved out of the misty shadows. The stupendous panorama of the Alps enveloped them. Kuno burst into a baritone yodel. He didn't do it badly, if such a distinction may be made about yodelling. The Baroness thought not.

"You promised, Kuno," she protested.

"But it is very good yodelling," said Kuno. "*Nicht wahr, Lewi?*"

"*Gut*," said Lewi, which sounds much better in its native guttural, even in Lewi's stoical grunt, than it looks. It means good.

"It's still yodelling," argued the Baroness.

Kuno defiantly started to oo-lee-aily-oo again. The Baroness, with the faintest gesture, indicated the Professor. Kuno realised that he was dangerously close to behaving like that most obnoxious of unsportsmen: the hearty chap forever bragging of his own excellent health and spirits, disregarding the depressing effect of this

on less robust persons. The bluff nuisance on shipboard, who details his appetite in the presence of sea-sick passengers, is of the breed. Such are never chosen by experienced leaders for expeditions requiring fortitude. They are known to wilt miserably in a pinch.

The Professor sensed that the yodel had been ended somehow on his account.

"But I like yodelling," he insisted. "Really, I do. It is such a valiant noise, a complete challenge to all the conventions."

"Even those of music," said the Baroness.

"One really can't yodel," added Kuno, "and have inhibitions."

"I wish to nurture my phobia," she said. "Is that the correct term, Ernst?"

"It is, if you are deeply opposed, beyond endurance, to yodelling."

"Phobia's the word," said the Baroness.

They reached the forbidding barrier of granite around which was sketched the trail that was called the Goat's Foot. The Professor had been heartening himself against this moment. His dread increased as the pass reared before them and as Lewi began to knot his rope about the

Professor's middle. The Professor felt like a small dog on the end of a leash.

"Come, Lewi," said Kuno. "It's not as bad as all that."

Lewi grunted.

"You two go ahead," he said. "It's safer the Professor goes with me."

"Don't let him scare you, Ernst."

"No, Kuno." The Professor tried to smile. "Let us proceed."

The Goat's Foot was well named. It would have challenged the sure hoofs of that beast. Its riskiest spot was only a step, literally, as Kuno had promised. A step, in fact, only three feet across, but fifteen hundred empty feet straight down if the footing missed. The step came as the trail dwindled to a narrow shelf, edging out from a precipitous jutting of rock. Even experienced climbers pressed back against the mountain wall as they stretched their legs across the long drop. The Baroness and Kuno did so, but with an air, as they did everything. A few yards beyond, the trail widened and emptied gratefully into a small meadow, flower-spangled. In its centre was a dwarfed and wind-twisted tree.

Kuno turned back to encourage the Professor.

"See how easy it is?" he called. "Come on! And don't look down!"

The Professor, his foot feeling for the edge of the gap, promptly looked down. Down fifteen hundred dizzying feet of emptiness. He swayed and clutched Lewi.

"I can't," he gasped.

And he couldn't, although Kuno stood at the other side of the gap to help him; although the Baroness came back the trail to lend a hand. There were no words that could quiet the unutterable fear that gripped the Professor.

"I know it's stupid," he said, holding on to Lewi. "But I simply can't."

Kuno, when he saw that it was impossible, tried to dismiss the incident casually.

"We're near enough the top," he said. "Let's all go back and celebrate with a bottle of wild-plum brandy."

"Ach, no, Kuno," the Professor said. "You and Marie go on, finish your climb. I will go back with Lewi and meet you later at the hotel . . . and we will have two bottles of brandy."

His laugh was marred by a thin cackling of

nerves. He wanted only to be away from the Goat's Foot, out of the mountains and back on level ground.

"*Auf Wiedersehn!*" he called, and waved to them cautiously as, clutching Lewi's leather jacket, he started back down the trail. Lewi, the philosopher stoic, inured to strange happenings in the hills, glanced back just once—a peculiar, unstoical glance—at the handsome couple as they continued to climb. Lewi, it was notorious in Schilzwalden, was what is known as a wrap-up for blondes of the slender type. There were few enough of them in this neck of the Tyrol.

"Hnppfh!" he grunted.

"What?" asked the Professor

"Nothing," said Lewi, "I only went Hnppfh."

"Oh."

The downward trail widened. Lewi reached for his porcelain pipe. Thus began Professor Volk's descent from the heights, a symbolic journey with which a clever writer could do quite a good deal.

XXIII

LEWI was carrying the Professor's alpenstock when they returned to the Fünfjahrzeiten Gasthaus. That baton of mountainous achievement had revolted the Professor after his failure at the Goat's Foot. Without the presence of Kuno and the Baroness he began to loathe his gay Tyrolean costume. He longed for the sober garb of his calling; the formal uniform he wore to scale loftier heights than Everest—and to descend to vaster depths than Hades—when he ventured into the terrain of the mind; as familiar to him as the mountains were to the giant Lewi. . . .

They passed, the giant and the Professor, through the early afternoon crowd on the Fünfjahrzeiten lawn. It reminded the Professor of their happy little *Klatsch* of the day before. It had been gay, despite the talk of mountain-climbing. Anyway, he had not spoiled their sport. The *Klatsch* reminded him of wild-plum brandy, and he invited Lewi into the tap-room. Lewi had a stein of beer that matched his size.

He grinned soberly through his philosopher's beard.

"To the Goat's Foot," said Lewi.

"To hell with the Goat's Foot," said the Professor.

As they put down their glasses, one of the assistant managers came up to the Professor. They had service in the Fünfjahrzeiten. The assistant manager had compromised with the Schilzwalden picturesque. He wore calf socks, woven in red and green, on his plump legs and leather shorts. But his upper body was encased in a neat cutaway, with white edging on the vest, compatible with the dignity of his post.

"A telegram for Professor Volk," he said.

The message was signed: Petrovanof. She was the only one who knew his exact whereabouts. Part of it was in code, which she had contrived after a similar emergency. This was urgent enough. The Clinic had communicated with her. Professor Volk was sorely needed in Vienna. It was a case requiring the authority and skill of the foremost alienist. It involved a man close to the head of the government; a case which, handled faultily, might become an international

scandal. In the Professor's absence, the Clinic officials were prepared to send to Germany for a rival psychiatrist, Dr. Rudolph Eierbach.

"Let them get Eierbach," mumbled the Professor.

"*Mein Herr?*"

"A fine *Schmierkäse*, this Eierbach!"

"*Ja*, Herr Professor."

The Professor had already made his decision, although he did not know it. After all, he was on his honeymoon.

"Is there an answer, Herr Professor?"

"Tell them 'No.' "

"Will the Professor so kindly write the message?"

"Bring me a telegraph-form, please."

The assistant manager's calf socks made a red-and-green flurry toward the door.

"Eierbach—pah!" snorted the Professor.

"Another brandy, barman."

He was familiar, unofficially, with the case. So was all of Austria and most of diplomatic Europe. The subject was a man whose name was frequently hissed in the secret councils of the Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern. He had forced

on his political party a policy of violence. A series of quiet assassinations were said to have been of his plotting. There was an unpleasant rumour that this badly timed Borgia had once been confined in an asylum. This was true. The Professor knew. The case was too ridiculously clear. Even Eierbach could scarcely bungle it.

"Eierbach," muttered the Professor.

The red-and-green legs came back, with telegraph-forms and a fountain-pen. The Professor put the form on the bar before him and poised the fountain-pen.

"I won't do it," he said. "Why should I? Let them send for Eierbach."

He wrote the name: Dr. Vera Petrovanof.

"What is my address?" he asked the assistant manager.

"Your address, Herr Professor?"

"Of course, my address . . . in Vienna. I wish to notify my assistant that I will not come . . . do you understand?"

"*Ja*, Herr Professor. But——"

"When is the next train for Vienna?"

"In fifty-three minutes, but——"

"Is there a car to take me to the station?"

"Ja, mein Herr, aber——"

The Professor turned to Lewi.

"When will they return?"

Lewi shrugged his massive shoulders.

"Maybe sunset. Maybe later."

"You will wait here, Lewi? . . . Good! . . . Pah, Eierbach!"

The Professor gulped his brandy and rushed from the tap-room.

"I think," said the assistant manager, "that Professor Volk changed his mind."

"Hnppfh," said Lewi.

The Professor hurried to the suite he occupied with the Baroness. In his own bedroom, he hastily squirmed out of the Tyrolean costume and threw it into a closet: cleated shoes, gay socks, leather breeches, everything. Everything except the cocky felt hat with the spray of boar's bristles. He merely forgot, in his excitement, to remove that. He got into his other clothes and was more comfortable. These were the garments of his caste, the broadcloth armour in which he would refute Dr. Rudolph Eierbach.

He went into her room, making the excuse that he must leave a note. He took off the alpine

hat as he entered, breathing her perfume that still scented the room. He went to her desk and wrote quickly, explaining and regretting the urgent summons to Vienna; begging her to continue her holiday, their honeymoon, without him. In concluding, he wrote:

More than ever I am thankful that Kuno was able to come with us. I leave you in Kuno's hands, knowing that he is our friend, knowing that I can trust him to take care of you better than I can myself.

Before he left the room, he stood for a while, humbly, beside her bed. Draped over the foot of it was a *négligé* that she had worn that morning, before the unlucky climb to the Goat's Foot. He touched the fragile garment and then, overcome, lifted it to his lips, shutting his eyes as he smelled her perfume, close . . .

The automobile was waiting to carry him to the railroad. There was barely time. About the car fluttered the assistant manager and a group of attendants. In their midst, stolidly, stood Lewi. The Professor appeared at a trot, the

Tyrolean bonnet at a saucy angle over his right eye. He handed Lewi the note he had written.

"See, please, that you deliver it to the Baroness von Schweinsöhrl," he said, and stepped into the automobile.

Just as the driver was about to shove the car into gear, the toy-peddler made his way to the running-board.

"Ach, Micki Maus!" exclaimed the Professor, and bought the carved toy.

The car sped down the mountain road, disappearing in a sun-gilt nimbus of alpine dust. Lewi stood, with expressionless eyes, watching until the car was out of sight. . . .

XXIV

LEWI was standing, his blue eyes still carefully expressionless, in a corner of the tap-room when the Baroness and Kuno returned from their climb. More carefully expressionless than usual, because the self-conscious stoic of the Schrecklichberg was trying to surprise the secret of what

may have gone on in the flowery meadow beyond the Goat's Foot. . . .

The Baroness and Kuno had gone directly to the tap-room. Smiling over the day's adventure, and pleasantly tired from it, they wished to celebrate with a drink. They stood at the bar and exchanged that look of complete understanding that was so pleasant to behold. Lewi beheld it and made his own interpretation.

"Plum brandy, two," said Kuno to the barman. "No, make it three. I'll look up Ernst."

"You must, Kuno. I'm afraid he had rather a rotten time of it."

"*Bitte*, Ladyship."

Lewi's bulky shape had loomed beside them. His eyes were like robin's eggs in the shaggy nest of his black eyebrows as he handed her the Professor's note.

"Have a stein, Lewi," Kuno said.

"*Danke*, Excellenz, *aber*——"

Kuno was too interested in the expression of the Baroness, as she unfolded the letter, to note the tone of disapproval in the mountaineer's refusal.

"Well, well," remarked the Baroness. "And

again well. I grow even more convinced that my honeymoon is being written by an Italian misogynist with a flair for farce."

"When one mentions farce of the sort," said Kuno, "one inevitably refers to the French dramatic school."

"This is not sufficiently sophisticated."

"I've always felt that French sophistication was a sort of decadent naïvete, really."

"You're thinking in terms of *La Vie Parisienne*, I'm afraid. Have you ever encountered the *Plat Beurre*?"

"That's not a journal, that's an illustrated symptom."

"Which brings me back to this letter. It's Italian, definitely. And, what's more, fourteenth-century Italian."

"As crude as all that? May one? . . ."

She handed him the letter, saying:

"The bridegroom has scuttled back to the laboratory."

Kuno began reading.

"Neither Italian nor French," he commented. "It's Spanish. Pedro de Alarcon. Spanish and incredible . . ."

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"I fear we're being a shade unintelligible to Lewi."

Kuno read the last paragraph. He reached for his brandy and read it again. He lit a cigarette.

"Another brandy?" he asked.

"If you don't mind. The wild plum, I find, is somewhat cloying."

"Two cognacs, Raynal 1858," he told the barman. He handed the letter back. "Did you read this? Where Ernst says he can trust me?"

"Ingenuous, isn't it?"

"Quite. Enough to be convincing."

"I wonder if I understand you?"

"I'm sure you do. He can, you know; I mean, trust me."

"You are charming," smiled the Baroness.

"Am I not? Charming and, if you please, sincere."

"Here's the Raynal 1858. Sincere, you say? Is this a tardy demonstration of the vaunted Adelhorst chivalry?"

"The trait hasn't been vaunted noticeably for decades, has it? It can't be that, can it?"

"I'm sure not."

"And it can't be my conscience."

"Fancy."

He sipped the Raynal thoughtfully.

"You know," he said, "I sort of miss Ernst."

"Don't be stupid, Kuno. I'll see you at dinner."

Kuno smiled at her retreating form.

"If you don't mind, Excellenz."

He had forgotten Lewi, who continued:

"If you don't mind, I think I will take that stein of beer."

"Haven't you had it yet? Hi, a stein of *dunkel* for Lewi! And another Raynal."

XXV

BACK in Vienna, Professor Volk plunged into his work under the brooding, long eyes of Fräulein Vera. She had met him at the station on his return. He had not considered this in any way strange, despite the fact that he had not telegraphed her of his return. Fräulein Vera always appeared when she was needed. Right then she was needed to rescue the Professor's luggage and guide him into a taxi-cab.

Fräulein Vera had not mistranslated the look of relief that came to his face when she met him. He was glad to see her. But it was not Fräulein Vera he greeted. It was Dr. Vera Petrovanof, his assistant, the symbol of his work in life; his undebated greatness.

"They have not sent for Eierbach?" he asked.

"Why should they, when they have Professor Volk?"

"Pah! You make the mistake of crediting those dunder-heads at the Clinic with reason."

"That much reason, anyway."

"You do not look well, Vera."

"I'm all right."

"You are run down. What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter with me."

Because this was as close to kindness as he ever got, her voice trembled and grew harsh with her effort to control it.

"You must not be like those stupid doctors," he said, "who neglect to prescribe for themselves."

Her glance was cryptically ironic.

"We shall prescribe a little tonic when we reach the apartment."

"We're going to the Clinic."

"What is that?"

"They're waiting for you there."

"Ach, they were so sure, then, that I'd leave my . . . my honeymoon?"

"I was."

"So; you were sure. May I ask why?"

"I knew you wouldn't let them call Eierbach——"

"Pah, Eierbach! What do I care for Eierbach? *Pfui* on Eierbach! . . . Let them call that quack . . . quack-quack, that's what he is. . . . Let him come. . . . I'll fix him like I fixed Herman Ganzfeder. . . ."

This was much more comfortable than his sympathy. This was much more Professor Volk. In half an hour he had the Clinic in a quaking turmoil, and in half a day he had disposed of the problem that had brought him back from Schilzwalden. The subject of this activity, far from becoming an international scandal, sank from public sight without a ripple. There was merely a rumour that he had been locked again in an asylum. This rumour, as before in the career of the ambitious Borgian, would have

proved true if anyone powerful enough had demanded the truth.

This disposed of, Professor Volk returned to the habit of the Clinic, the Asylum and the University. And he began the composition of a chapter for his book designed to put Dr. Eierbach, of Berlin, in his proper place.

Fräulein Vera was worried. She discerned something sinister under the familiar professorial manner. She had promised never to psycho-analyse herself, but she hadn't promised not to psycho-analyse her preceptor. And she was worried, sensing the truth; worried and glad to have him back in her charge, for a little while, anyway. She could take care of him, subject him once more to the petty tyranny for which he expressed such contempt: forgotten rubbers, classroom engagements, regular meals, instructions to the barber. . . .

There may have been a throb of feminine satisfaction for her, beneath the rigid professional mask, on the evening she asked if he had remembered to send a telegram to the Baroness. He waited a fraction too long to answer.

"Of course I remembered. What made you think I would forget a thing like that? Naturally, I sent a telegram . . . in fact, I sent her two. . . . Forget to telegraph the Baroness? . . . Pah!"

He felt that his vehemence was not convincing. He attempted, in a manner that he would have scorned to analyse before a freshman class, to obscure his guilt with a quarrel. Fräulein Vera enjoyed that, a fact which would have been equally clear to the Professor on any other occasion.

"I suppose you think it's queer," he snarled, "that I left my honeymoon to answer the call of professional duty?"

"Not at all," she answered sincerely.

"Or that the Baroness did not return with me?"

"Not at all," she said again sincerely.

Her answer infuriated him. He insisted on trying to goad her into a similar temper.

"Or that I left her alone?"

"You didn't leave her alone."

"So! You try to make something out of that, no? What have you against the Graf Adelhorst?"

"Nothing, except that I've never liked him."

"Why?"

"Perhaps for the same reason that you admire him: because he has no inhibitions."

"And is that not admirable?"

"You not only admire him—you envy him, because you have inhibitions."

The Professor laughed. He tried to make it sarcastic and devastating. It was a touch too theatrical to be effective.

"So Professor Volk has inhibitions?" he chortled. "And possibly also complexes, phobias and other psychoses."

"Possibly."

"The great physician, no, laid low by a combination of the diseases he professes to cure?"

"It has happened."

"Lovely. And you, Dr. Petrovanof; doubtless you have analysed this deplorable affliction and can suggest helpful treatment?"

"I could."

"Pah!"

"Would you care to hear my diagnosis?"

"Nonsense! Why should I be interested in the silly meowing of a schoolgirl? Already I have

let you waste too much of my time with your . . . your . . . yes, your impertinence. Go home . . . Go home and rest . . . even your brilliant mind must be taxed with such heroic effort. Go home, do you hear? Leave me to my work. . . . Inhibitions, indeed. . . . Me with inhibitions. . . .”

Fräulein Vera left. It was the first time since his return that he had dismissed her early. She wore a strangely contented smile as she walked out into the Vienna summer evening. . . .

When he was sure she had gone, Professor Volk drew the three curtains across his study window and went stealthily to the bronze head of Saritza Michaelis. That night, in the secrecy of his chamber, he spoke his soul to the image of the Baroness; poured out the words he dared not say when he was really with her. And he did not send the telegram. . . .

XXVI

LEWI the guide had assembled his gigantic framework on a conveniently large rock. His coiled

rope at his feet and the alpenstock stuck vertically among some stones, he had relapsed into his favourite tableau: the hill conqueror holding communion with the landscape. He puffed with philosophic deliberation on his long, curved pipe with the porcelain bowl. The cool breeze lifted his whiskers as he raised his head from the tumbled valley far below to follow an eagle's flight against the blue. He kept his broad, leather back stolidly turned to the handsome pair who had scaled the peak with him; who, in fact, had set the pace for him.

They were fit creatures to be lolling on this alpine Olympus. The Baroness was stretched out on a carpet of tough mountain grass. Her impudent felt hat lay beside her. It was decorated with a sprig of edelweiss which Kuno had plucked from a perilous ledge. Kuno sat near her, his bare knees raised to make a rest for his arms. Between his heavy-shod feet a bottle of wine was propped. He raised the bottle and tilted his head back.

"Still being Sir Kuno?" she asked.

He grunted, the bottle at his lips.

"Still the chivalrous knight in shining

armour," she continued, "defending the fair name of a woman, whether she likes it or not?" Kuno wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his coarse, woollen jacket and grinned.

"And incidentally," she added, "oh, quite incidentally, spoiling her honeymoon."

"Come now," he answered, "surely my eccentric morality can't take away the grandeur of all this——"

He gestured widely across the panorama of clouds and mountains. The eagle dipped its wings and made a steep bank into nothing. A shepherd's horn bellowed. From somewhere in the low mists came the thin tinkling of a bell.

"I simply don't understand," she said.

"There's nothing mysterious about Nature, no matter what poets say. On the contrary——"

"I mean: you."

"Me?"

"Don't be perverse, Excellenz. Do you fancy you've acquired inhibitions? I ask, you understand, purely in the interests of science."

"I gathered that. And I wonder if an inhibition or two mightn't be desirable."

"I think you're just being mean."

"Ah, now we have the woman argument, which must always be personal. Perhaps, after all, my recently acquired repressions offend you because they are too complex for the instinctive, primitive feminine mind that goes so straight to what it desires. You will pardon my psychopathology?"

The Baroness was nibbling a spear of coarse grass.

"And you realise, naturally, that my whimsical behaviour has nothing to do with morals. . . ."

"Naturally."

"You also may have gathered that I have no scruples about betraying a trust openly; that is, to a man's face. But when the potential victim is miles away—well, I simply can't."

The Baroness sat up and smoothed her homespun climbing-breeches over her knees, where they were reinforced with chamois.

"Pass the bottle, please. I find this ethical discussion a bit wearying. I am married, you know, to a famous psychiatrist."

"Are you not. He is also very clever at this sort of discussion. Although I must point out

that his research has been done in the laboratory whereas mine, you might say, has been field-work. There's a difference."

"Isn't there?"

She gazed over the misty valley. The eagle had reappeared out of the empty blue and was circling in loops that covered miles. The bell tinkled far off.

"I think," she said, "we'd better go back to Vienna."

She got lithely to her feet. Kuno rose, the bottle in his hand. He held it against the sun, shook his head over its depleted condition and drained it. Lewi eased the heavy coil of rope across his shoulder. They started down the trail, the Baroness in the lead. She skipped like a chamois across a rough strewing of rocks and paused.

"Chivalry," she said, "has something to do, has it not, with a horse?"

Kuno paused beside her.

"It should be very pleasant," he said, "this time of the year in Vienna."

He skipped adroitly after her.

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Kuno was alone in the tap-room, waiting for the Baroness and the automobile that was to carry them to the railroad. Lewi lumbered up to the bar. He had put on a cloth jacket with silver buttons and a woven tie that peeped festively from the covert of black whiskers. There was a look in the pale blue eyes; rather a sly look. Kuno was thinking of something else.

"Just in time, my bold crag-jumper," he said, "for a foaming, farewell stein."

"*Danke, Excellenz, aber*—may I have a word with the Excellenz?"

"Certainly, Lewi, as many as you like. In fact, I'd rather enjoy a departure from your monosyllabic discourse. Impressive, Lewi, but overdone just a trifle."

"I think my thoughts, Excellenz."

"Commendable habit. And you wish to break your brooding silence?"

"As man to man, Excellenz."

"Ah!"

"And more privately. Will you come with me?"

"I can't resist. Lead on."

Lewi led him to a spot in the rear of the hotel,

where a tall hedge of berried bushes screened the refuse-cans of the *Funfjahrzeiten*. Lewi glanced around mysteriously. He grinned.

"You have joked about my silence, Excellenz," he said. "But silence may be valuable."

"No doubt. Disclose your argument, philosopher."

"Especially my silence may be valuable—to you."

"Come to the point, Lewi."

"Yes, Excellenz. I have, you must admit, been something more than a guide to you and the Baroness. I have been, if it is not too much to say, your companion; your chaperon——"

"Slowly, my Tyrolean friend."

"Surely the Graf realises that my presence on these mountain-climbings has kept the tongue of scandal still. It has protected her reputation—and yours, Excellenz . . ."

"You are becoming clear, despite yourself."

"I knew you would view the situation sensibly, *Hochgeboren*. Had it not been for me, who is there to say what happened when you and the Baroness were alone in the hills."

"But nothing happened."

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"Yet who is there to say even that?"

"Why, you for one."

"And if I chose to say something else? If I even chose to hint something else? Suppose, for instance, I were to write such a friendly letter to Professor Volk."

"How much?" asked Kuno.

"Times are hard, Excellenz, and you are rich. In Schilzwalden we do not have many chances, as in other parts of the Tyrol, to trim the tourist, as the saying goes. Also there is a girl who works in the community dairy who will make trouble if she doesn't get some money . . ."

"It's blackmail. You know that, don't you?"

"The Professor would believe me, I think."

"In America, where they cultivate graphic speech, it is called the down-shakings."

"Picturesque," said Lewi.

"Is it not? Lewi, you asked for this talk as man to man, didn't you?"

"I have been so bold, Excellenz, and you have been most gracious."

"*Noblesse oblige*," said Kuno. "And man to man."

He moved as if to reach for his wallet. Lewi

stepped closer. Kuno moved again, swiftly and violently. His first punch caught Lewi on the nose. Lewi swayed back, blinking. The second hit him flush on the jaw. The black beard did not soften the blow. Lewi stiffened and fell backward. His head cl-lanked against the metal of a refuse-can.

Kuno strolled through the tap-room, downed a double Raynal and joined the Baroness, waiting in the automobile.

"You needn't look so pleased with yourself," she said.

"I've just rid myself of an old inhibition," he explained. "For the first time, since I was a heedless child, I've struck an underling."

"Not the barman?"

"*Himmel* forbid! . . . It was Lewi."

"Good enough," said the Baroness.

The motor started.

XXVII

PROFESSOR VOLK was waiting, eagerly, on the station platform in Vienna. Since he received

Kuno's telegram, he had been preparing himself for the ordeal of this reunion with the goddess. He was determined to behave differently this time. There would be no more tongue-tied incoherency, no traitorous trembling of his hands. He was going to approach her, gaily, boldly. He was going to call her Mitzl: "Ah, there, Mitzl, old girl. Let's trot around to the café and down a couple of cognacs; what say?" He was going to put his arms around her, give her a good hug and kiss her on the lips: "How's that for a kiss, Mitzl? The old Professor's not so bad, yes? Have another?" He hadn't quite been able to imagine the second kiss. But he had rehearsed the whole thing the night before in his secret chamber. The one he called Mitzl, shamelessly there, had not repulsed him. . . .

The clean light of morning is supposed to dissipate the insomniac imaginings of the night; to wipe away the desperate worries that close in with the dark. The man with the overdue mortgage who leaned lankily over the foot of the bed turns out to be, with dawn well up, a genial fellow who understands the situation thoroughly and is more than inclined to be

lenient. So they say. That long-delayed visit to the dentist, nocturnally promising bridge-work that would confound an engineer, in the optimistic sun becomes so trivial that it is again postponed. And the girl at the house-party, definitely in half-sleep the type that leaves a note behind when suiciding, disappears with a snap of the fingers after the morning shower. . . .

Not so with the Professor. The night before he had been extravagantly happy, sure of himself. The sun, glittery that summer morning in Vienna, evaporated his resolution with the dew. He awakened cheerfully, thinking of a classroom witticism he would utter that day in the fashion of Whistler, of whom he had never heard. Then he remembered. Lina, his serving-maid, sensed it as soon as he entered the dining-room. She stood by, to be sure that he didn't drop a lump of sugar into his egg-cup. That had happened another morning, before his celebrated exposition at the University of the existence of a triple- as well as a dual-complex chamber of the mind.

It didn't help him very much, either, to nag Fräulein Vera, when she brought the daily list of

engagements into the study. She pointed out particularly that he was to meet the Baroness and the Graf Adelhorst. He exploded at that, but it was a piffling explosion, a mere squib. She had the effrontery, as he left, to remind him to stop at Herr Schmidt's and be shaved for the occasion.

"Pah!" said the Professor.

The confusion of the station again upset him. He tried desperately to recall the ecstatic heroism of the night before. "Ah there, Mitzl, old girl——" Porters banging luggage around. Conductors shouting. Steam-whistles piping staccato. Bells clanging. A fresh flurry of attendants in uniform. A forward-surg-ing of the crowd. And the sombre triumph of the in-coming train. . . .

The Professor was wedged in the crowd, some distance from the coach from which Kuno and the Baroness descended. She was brown with the sun; a warm, pagan goddess, instinct with the woods, the hills and the free wind. The two of them came down the platform, laughing, and people turned to look at them a second time as they passed.

The Professor was glad for the momentary shelter of the crowd. The ineffable sensation of her reality smote him. Dazed, he tried to nerve himself. The crowd parted and he stood before them.

"Ernst!" cried Kuno.

"Kuno! Marie!"

He remembered dizzily.

"M-Mitzl!"

Her astonishment at his first use of her familiar name touched him like a repelling hand.

"Mitzl?" she said, amused, graciously enough.

"Baroness," he said.

The scene he had rehearsed in his chamber impelled him without any conscious volition. He was like a Micki Maus that had been wound up and must do its trick. He put his arms around her clumsily, and as clumsily reached for her lips. Again she was astonished, and again he translated this as disapproval.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I shouldn't, I g-guess . . . not here in the station. . . ."

Kuno's smile pierced his swimming emotions. He turned to his friend, relieved.

"It was a good holiday, no?" he asked.

"We missed you, Ernst," said Kuno. "Eh, Baroness?"

"Night and day," she said.

"Ach!" The Professor was happy again; utterly bewildered—but happy.

XXVIII

CYNICAL critics of life have observed often enough that a man may be a hero to one woman—in fact, it is difficult to avoid this rôle—but between two women he is, inevitably, a clown. Professor Volk, not quite an unqualified hero, rose close to that stature in the instinctive conflict of the Baroness and Fräulein Vera. They faced each other a short time after the Professor, still clinging to Kuno's arm, brought the Baroness from the station to her new home in his apartment.

The Baroness was pleased with the place. After all, it was on a very fashionable *Strasse*

and quite modern and large. She would be able to arrange a private suite of her own. She met Lina, who was a natural giggler, and Kathi, the housekeeper. Both of them immediately divided by two the loyalty they had for the Professor.

"It is all very lovely, Ernst," said the Baroness. "Any woman might be happy here."

"Ach, it has been a bachelor's den for so long," he apologised.

"It doesn't look it," she said. "Or do I only imagine I detect the woman's touch?"

"Fräulein Vera has looked after it."

"Ah, yes. Fräulein Vera. I'd like to meet her."

"She is in the study. I will send for her."

"No, indeed; let's go there."

They went from the living quarters into the study. Kuno, as if it were a personal collection, directed her attention at once to the gallery in green bronze. The Baroness, fascinated, looked on the vivacious features of Saritza Michaelis and into the puzzled eyes of Petra Vorrishé.

"That one over there," Kuno pointed out, "with the scar that joins the corner of his mouth to his left eye, is Korchpa Borgvak. He hired a

man to shoot Mrs. Borgvak and then assassinated the assassin. He told the police a straight enough story of how he had killed the chap while trying to defend his home. He'd have escaped detection, too, except he felt that the true story placed him in a finer, more romantic light."

"Romance?"

"Korchpa felt that way about it. He said he had her killed because he loved her."

"Logical brute, your Borgvak."

"Clear thinker," Kuno agreed. "You see: he loved her so much he couldn't bear to think of her becoming a mother."

"Was that crisis impending?"

"Well, no; but it might have developed, biology being what it is, and Korchpa simply couldn't bear the thought."

"How about the hired assassin, who, I presume, acted in good faith?"

"A mere detail, however regrettable, to a true romantic like Korchpa."

The Professor brought in Fräulein Vera. She had known she would be asked to meet the Baroness, but she had made no preparation, by

so much, or so little, as a visit to the hair-dresser. She was as she always was, which was enough. The Baroness found it so, estimating her dark exoticism, and appreciating that there had been no call on the coiffeur.

"Kuno has told me about you, Dr. Petrovanof," said the Baroness. "But he neglected to tell me that you were so beautiful."

The Professor chuckled.

"Ha-ha, you hear that, Fräulein Vera? The Baroness says you are beautiful. Ha-ha."

"The Baroness is being kind," said Fräulein Vera. "She can afford to be, being so truly beautiful herself."

"Thank you, my dear," said the Baroness. "But we both know, don't we, that no woman can afford to be that generous?"

"There are times," put in Kuno, judicially. "Notably, when one is blonde and the other brunette."

"Graf Kuno has certain feminine traits," explained the Baroness. "Or perhaps, as a practising psychologist, you have made this observation yourself."

"It is not too obscure," Fräulein Vera smiled.

"I'm sorry I interrupted," said Kuno. "Excuse me, please."

Both women smiled.

"At any rate," said the Baroness, "I think my husband has surprisingly excellent judgment."

"Having met you," said Fräulein Vera, "I would not dispute it. However, Professor Volk had no choice in my case. I forced myself on him, actually."

"That is correct," said the Professor. "She made me accept her."

"First, though, I had to promise not to fall in love with him."

"Not really."

"It was necessary," declared the Professor. "You see: Fräulein Vera was my patient——"

"No professional secrets," said the Baroness.

"Thank you," said Fräulein Vera. "I'll be glad to tell you any time you wish."

"What I'd like to know," said the Baroness, "is: what sort of promise did my husband make?"

"Nonsense!" said the Professor.

"Nonsense indeed," the Baroness said.

"Indeed," said Fräulein Vera.

And both women smiled again.

Fräulein Vera, pleading work, did not join them at coffee, which Kathi had prepared for the home-coming. Later, the Professor went into the study to go over some papers with his assistant. Kuno and the Baroness were left alone.

"She's in love with him," said the Baroness.

"Among the least pleasant of your failings, Frau Volk, I have never detected banality."

"But she is. And she glories in it."

"She idolises him, in fact."

"And she knows I know it."

"Doesn't she, though?"

"I don't like that flagrantly possessive air of hers."

"I noticed that, for the first time, you referred to your husband as your husband."

"Did I, really? How charming."

"I only wish the Professor were rational enough to enjoy the immemorial spectacle: two women, otherwise reasonable, embattled over a male."

"She's really nothing more than a hireling."

"You do not contemplate discharging her?"

"And have her convinced that I fear her Slavonic fascination over my husband?"

"There you go again: husband."

"A technicality. No; nothing quite so banal as dismissing her. You under-estimate my guile, dear Kuno."

"Not I, Mitzl."

"She is beautiful, isn't she?"

"Ravishing. Absolutely stunning; but, of course, in a rather unsubtle fashion."

"You're such a comfort, darling."

"Am I not?"

"I wonder how she became his patient?"

"She offered to tell you herself."

"Do you suppose it was something—well, something romantic?"

"Like Korchpa Borgvak, you mean?"

"Yes; romantic and horrid."

"She's Russian, you know, and intense."

The Baroness became mistress of the Volk apartment. Not only did she have workmen in to make alterations in that part of it which she had decided to make into a private suite, but she refurnished the entire establishment. She made endless trips to furniture shops, drapers, interior-

decorators. Kuno smiled, understanding, over the total erasure of Fräulein Vera's influence in the living-quarters.

So did Fräulein Vera.

XXIX

It couldn't be said that the Professor relapsed, because he had never been near recovery from his first, delirious sight of the Baroness. He never got used to her. It wasn't that the Baroness didn't try to remedy the situation. She blamed herself for the failure of his clumsy demonstration of affection at the station. She did her best to restore him to that mood, her efforts at times close to outright seduction. He simply was uncomfortable in her presence. It was somewhat better when Kuno was there. Because of this, he had attempted to persuade Kuno to move into the Volk apartment with them. Kuno demurred politely. He and the Baroness had decided the point earlier.

"Your husband," he reported to her, "has invited me to share your domesticity."

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"He told me he was going to."

"You were charmed with the prospect?"

"Obviously——"

"Ah!"

"——obviously, that is, to Ernst."

"Oh."

"But it won't do, Kuno. It's best you have an apartment of your own."

"I've already arranged it."

"Somewhere nearby, of course."

"I've also arranged that."

They exchanged the look of complete understanding they always had for each other.

"You're having a few high-minded thoughts of your own, aren't you, Mitzl?"

"Quaint, isn't it?"

"It's not like us," said Kuno. "It appears that we have been too sure of our essential wickedness."

"I hope it doesn't bring out a latent conscience," said the Baroness.

"I've often been afraid I might succumb because at heart I'm a sentimentalist; but you——"

"I've grown fond of him, damn it."

"I feared as much."

"I go so far as to worry about him. It isn't possible for a man to be so naïve. Not in Vienna."

"That's rank patriotism."

"I've even lost interest in devilling Fräulein Vera."

"Now, now," said Kuno. "We mustn't grow morbid."

"I've a feeling that she is a steadying influence for him; that, because both of them know so much about the mind, she understands him."

"The Professor's steady enough. As for understanding him: that's simple. All one has to do is examine his mental process."

"That's all," agreed the Baroness, hopelessly.

"Strange," said Kuno, "how one little touch of innocence corrodes our meticulous sophistication, reduces us practically to the point of decency."

"It's not funny."

"I've never been more uncomfortable."

So Kuno did not come to live in the Volk apartment. That is: he did not have a room there. But, to the great satisfaction of the

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Professor, he appeared there frequently. Despite the worry of the Baroness; despite the fact that the Professor spent long hours nearly every night in the inner chamber of his study—he had his new book to complete—he was looking exceptionally well and seemed in excellent spirits. Because of his night-work, and because of his tasks at the Clinic, the University and the Asylum, he was more often than not unable to accompany the Baroness on her rare social excursions or her many other diversions. She swam, rode and played tennis. Kuno swam, rode and played tennis with her. As often as they could they coaxed him away from his labours. Now and then he would meet them at the terrace café, where it had all started. They took him out to dine a few times and to the theatre. Once they persuaded him to attend a dance. He did not dance. He never had. But he enjoyed watching Kuno and the Baroness waltz—and he escaped as quickly as possible to his chamber. They even tried to repeat the success of the amusement-park. It didn't work. The Professor took only an academic interest in the crockery-smashing and was plainly terrified

at the rides. And on the way home, driving through the Prater, he was embarrassed by what he saw.

Very often the Professor found himself alone at meals. This was especially true of breakfast. The Baroness was an early riser and an early exerciser. The Professor accepted this happily. To tell the truth, these lonely meals were the only ones he enjoyed. There was but a single objection: the maid, Lina, and her dreams. She had them.

Lina and Kathi, the housekeeper, regarded the Professor as a superior sort of fortune-teller and were appropriately thrilled. They did miss the crystal ball and the black robe, spangled zodiacally. They consoled themselves for this lack with the belief that in his secret chamber the Professor mumbled cabalistic incantations and composed potent draughts of toad's eyes, the powdered fangs of snakes and other ingredients. The Professor, unaware of their belief, was tolerant enough of them.

He could not ignore the simpering eagerness with which Lina attended him one morning as he had breakfast alone.

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"If the Professor will be so kind——" she began as she poured his third cup of coffee.

He listened with becoming gravity. Lina outdid herself.

"I had a dream," she said, "where I was in a little boat, only there weren't any oars, and in the water there were a lot of snakes and I picked one of them up. It was terrible, because when I am awake I can't even look at a snake, let alone touch one."

The Professor nodded, gravely.

"Then, all of a sudden, while I still held the snake in my hand, I was in a little house without any door and only one window. Only it wasn't really a house at all, but more like a big windmill, going round, and round. And the window was nailed shut. I wasn't scared, though, but I felt like something awful was going to happen. I patted the snake on the head and he looked at me, but he only had one eye. And the window opened by itself and a white pigeon flew in and the snake tried to bite the pigeon and then the snake started to die and I woke up."

"That was fortunate," said the Professor.

"Was it silly to dream that?"

"By no means, Lina."

"What, please does it mean?"

"It means: the butcher's boy."

"Oh, Professor!"

"You still meet him, evenings?"

Lina hung her head, giggling. Then she asked:

"Does it mean something is going to happen?"

"Yes; you are going for a walk in the Prater with him."

"But I knew that already, Herr Professor."

"Perhaps you know then, also, what else is going to happen?"

"Something else? Oh, please, Professor Volk! Please, what?"

"The butcher's boy can tell you that better than I can."

XXX

THE Professor still was chuckling as he went into his study.

"Lina has made another of her oblique confessions," he explained to Fräulein Vera.

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"Another dream?"

"A most complete one."

"The same kind as before?"

"Too complete. To the same effect, of course: snakes, windmills, white doves . . ."

"Just her plump, normal self, eh?"

"Except that her subconscious is becoming in some manner educated. Lina is learning to decorate her dream fulfilments too authentically."

"Do you suppose," asked Fräulein Vera, "that Lina is secretly reading up on Freud?"

"Imagine." The Professor chuckled again. "I must suggest it to Sigmund when I visit him to-day. He hears few enough jokes. . . ."

An automobile horn sounded cheerfully. They both recognised it. Professor Volk had bought a smart car for the Baroness. Kuno drove it. The Professor looked down into the *Strasse* from his window as Kuno, handsome in riding togs, stepped from the wheel and made laughing courtesy of assisting the Baroness, in jodhpurs. The Professor smiled, fondly.

"A striking pair, no?" he said.

"Very." There was pity in her grey-green,

lovely eyes. "There is a picture of them in *Die Wochenente* this week. Would you like to see it?"

He was eager at once. She brought the paper from the ante-room.

"A fine likeness!" he exclaimed.

It was. It was prominently vignetted among a group of snapshots of smart Viennese in informal moments. *Die Wochenente* called this page: Lens Gossip. Some of its finest studies never reached the half-tone state. There were those who preferred not to have their portraits appear and who were willing to pay for the privilege. To these the editor of *Die Wochenente* surrendered the photographic plate—which the purchaser invariably smashed at once—reserving only a print for *Die Wochenente's* private filing-cabinet.

The photograph of the Baroness and Kuno had been taken on the tennis court and in proper costumes for the sport. They had been snapped in one of their characteristic moments of laughter. The Baroness's arm was through that of the Graf Adelhorst. The caption asked, innocently enough: "What Are They Laughing At?" The sub-caption referred to them by their titles

and, after that of the Baroness, in brackets: (Frau Ernst Volk). The Professor examined it in admiration. His eye was attracted by the type of a column headed only by a bold line of question-marks: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? The first paragraph said:

“Vienna’s smart set is giggling—ever so discreetly, to be sure—over the near-sightedness of the erudite professor whose wife, recently acquired from insolvent nobility, finds such gay distraction with a certain K——, A——Graf, long known for these charming gallantries.”

The Professor, still interested in the type in which it was set, read the paragraph again before its meaning seeped into his consciousness. He turned on Fräulein Vera.

“This is a very cheap trick,” he said, coldly.

“Of course, it’s only gossip,” she replied
 “You know *Die Wochenente*.”

“I do not mean this,” he said, pointing to the item. “I mean: it is a shoddy trick of yours, try-

ing to hint to me in this way that there is something wrong in the friendship of the Baroness and Kuno . . . a shoddy, rotten trick!"

"You'd rather not know?"

"Know what?"

"The truth."

"Have I ever refused to accept it?"

"Yes."

"Tell me when!"

She started to do so. He halted her with a violent gesture.

"Shut up! I will not listen! Do you hear? . . . Why should I listen to your insinuations? . . . You, because you have been trusted, are more contemptible than these perverted penny-a-line scandal-mongers. Do you think I am going to let my happiness be spoiled by lies? . . . that I, Professor Volk, can be touched by your malicious tongue or their venom-tipped pens? . . ."

The Baroness and Kuno, entering the living-quarters of the apartment, passed the thick folding-doors which closed off the study. They could hear the Professor's voice, and catch its temper, although they could not distinguish the

words. They listened in surprise.

"I never heard him like that before," said the Baroness.

"Nor I. Fine, healthy roar, isn't it?"

"I wish he'd go at me like that some time."

"Ah, masochistic. . . ."

"I think not. I'd be willing to chance it, though, if it'd help him."

A fresh outburst rumbled to them.

"It's splendid," said the Baroness.

"*Himmel* help the poor student," said Kuno, "who hasn't got the right answers to-day."

They went pleasantly in to breakfast.

.

Willi Zimmerkopf leered idiotically across his studio table. The Professor sat facing him. Three bodiless heads, hung on hooks set in the wall, stared glassily over Willi's shoulder at the neatly-clipped scrap of paper on the table between them. It was the vignette from *Die Wochenente*. Shears had removed the names.

"I have been wishing to speak to you," said Willi Zimmerkopf, "about those bronze casts in your study."

"You admire them, no?"

"Not too much. Oh, they're interesting enough. Their subjects would insure that. But the touch that would have made them live——"

"Nonsense! Those were done for me by the cleverest artist in all Austria."

"The Professor forgets," said Willi, coldly, "that he is in the presence of the cleverest artist in all Europe."

"Pardon me, Willi."

"I can afford to, Ernst. At the same time I must repeat my criticism: they lack life."

"They were made from the living models."

"That's just it. Dead copies of Nature, executed, no doubt, by some normal fellow entirely out of sympathy with the beautifully mad creatures he was asked to make immortal. What an opportunity!"

"You could improve on such work?"

"Must I grow redundant?"

"No, please."

"Very well, then. I merely ask that, next time you add to your bronze portraits you give me the commission."

"It shall be yours, Willi . . . and meanwhile,

now, one of your finest creations?"

"Nature itself," Willi promised. "And this figure also, naturally, for anatomical instruction in the classroom?"

"Naturally."

"Naturally," repeated Willi.

"You doubt me?"

"Why should I?"

"Then why do you sit there, leering like a maniac?"

"I have told you before that I always leer when I am especially interested. But I am grateful that you say: 'like a maniac' . . . do you really think? . . ."

"Nonsense! You are as sane as I am."

"Ah!" breathed Willi, and he leered again.

XXXI

THERE were other weightily sly remarks in *Die Wochenente*. And other photographs of Kuno and the Baroness reproduced in the *Lens Gossip*. It really wasn't quite sporting. Even the editor

of *Die Wochenente*, underscoring the “? ? ? ? ?” column for the printer, had to admit that. Nevertheless, it was the most distinguished gossip of the season and he had to consider his public. There were even question-marked references to a certain honeymoon in S—— in the Tyrolean Alps and the return of a prominent alienist therefrom without his bride.

Professor Volk read *Die Wochenente* on the stick-file on which periodicals were preserved in a coffee-house far from the smart Ringstrasse establishment of Herr Schwanz.

The Professor, if he had had any doubt in the matter, would have assured himself that he had not gone to the coffee-house for this very purpose. Nonsense! He had chanced to be strolling in the neighbourhood and felt the pleasant urge for a cup of coffee in a place where he was not known by sight. Nothing like a strong cup of coffee at the end of an afternoon. *Die Wochenente* happened to be handy, that was all. Was he going to refuse to look at it because it had gossiped about him? Nonsense again!

He opened the paper. There was a snapshot of Kuno, in dashing officer's uniform, after win-

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ning the gentleman's steeplechase and being presented with the Jockey Club silver cup. It was being handed to him by Marie, Baroness von Schweinsöhrl (Frau Volk). They certainly were a handsome pair. There was another quick shot of them, laughing, arm in arm, watching a polo match. A paragraph, under the heading of question-marks, said:

“A certain noted alienist visited Sigmund Freud last Wednesday and both denied to the Press that it was anything but a friendly chat between two old cronies. There are those, however, who choose to ask: ‘Was one of the great psychiatrists asking professional aid in his own peculiar domestic problem?’ And we don’t mean Freud.”

That just went to show how these penny-liners could distort facts. He and Freud had really been chatting about a proposed experiment involving regulated hypnosis over a pro-

tracted interval for supplying wish-fulfilment artificially in the secondary sub-conscious. In passing, he had told Dr. Freud the joke of Fräulein Vera about the housemaid's possible interest in the Freudian teachings. Freud hadn't seemed to think it was very funny. Perhaps he'd told it wrong. He turned again to the picture of Kuno, on his sweat-shining horse, receiving the silver cup from the Baroness . . . a handsome pair. . . . When the Professor left the coffee-house, the waiter was shocked to discover that the patron who had been so fussy about seeing the latest issue of *Die Wochenente* had not touched his coffee. . . .

Fräulein Vera, since the morning he had called her malicious and contemptible, had withdrawn from him the consolation of quarrelling. He tried to prod her into further criticism that he might have the satisfaction of raising his voice; destroying her opinion of his matrimonial affairs and noisily attempting to make his own convincing. He tried again that evening when he went to his study from the coffee-house:

"I happened to pick up a *Die Wochenente* to-day," he began, entering the ante-room.

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"I made out your list of engagements for to-morrow," she said.

"Thank you. It published a picture of Graf Adelhorst winning the gentlemen's steeple-chase."

"You asked me to remind you to prepare your paper for the faculty meeting."

"It also showed the Baroness presenting him with the winner's trophy."

"Interesting," she said. "The faculty meets in the morning."

"Come now," said the Professor. "Surely your devious Russian mind can find something sinister in this coincidence."

"I'm sorry," said Fräulein Vera, "that I am unable to pay you the subtle compliment of my jealousy."

"Ach, your jealousy. So finally you admit——"

His cunning look reminded her of Willi Zimmerkopf. She said:

"It may interest the Professor to know that another box, marked: books, has been delivered."

He was interested, immediately. Yet he could

not leave off taunting her.

"And is this box," he asked, "also suspiciously too light for books?"

"That fault has been corrected," she said.

"Would it be heavy enough," he went on, "to contain a human body? The body, say, of a beautiful young woman as in the Holzbruck case? Except nicely dissected with a surgeon's scalpel . . . Should we telephone Inspector Schnorrheim, do you think? . . ."

He chortled, evilly, from the doorway. He entered his study, locking the door behind him. The box was lying close to the entrance of his secret chamber. He went at once to the window and drew the three curtains shut. . . .

Fräulein Vera listened. Suddenly she seized her hat and her cape. She put them on, blindly, as she hurried from the ante-room and from the apartment.

XXXII

THE door to the secret chamber slid back noiselessly. Across its sill, the Professor dragged the

wooden box. It was heavier. Willi Zimmerkopf had looked after this detail almost too thoroughly. The Professor shoved the box into a shadowed corner of the chamber. He avoided looking at the figure in the Paquin gown, seated close to his work-chair. Still averting his eyes, he went into the shadows at the end of the room. Standing there was a carved wooden wardrobe, taller than a tall man. It had long twin doors. The Professor opened one of them and took from the dark recess the lavender dressing-robe, which had been too ribald for his wedding night. With his back to the figure at the writing-table, he put on the robe, knotting the tasselled sash precisely.

Not until then did the Professor turn back into the room. He switched on the shaded light over the table.

"Dear, dear Mitzl," he said softly, wearily.

The figure of the Baroness, seeming to breathe in the mellow light, looked back at him with steady eyes of lapis; with a serene smile.

"Dear my Mitzl," he said. "I am a little tired, my adored one . . . a little confused by the world outside and its brain-sick fools, howling at the

stars, dancing like badly-jointed marionettes on the tangled strings of their lunacy. . . .”

He moved closer. His voice became imploring.

“It is to you I must come always,” he said, “for sympathy and understanding . . . here in this little, true world where you and I are so happy . . . you are happy, aren’t you, Mitzl? . . . where you give me the beauty and the solace of your real self . . . as you may not do—you, who are so proud and fine—in the insane, outer world. . . .”

He kneeled beside the figure, drooped his head in its satin lap and placed one of the slim, waxen hands against his cheek.

“Comfort me, my Mitzl, my wife,” he murmured. “Do not withhold from me the quiet rapture that enfolds me when I come to you, worn by their babbling . . . exhausted trying to explain to empty-eyed idiots their own idiocies . . . give me strength, my beloved. . . .”

He looked, wistfully shy, into the face above him. He patted the hand. His voice became steadier, as he went on:

“With you by my side, I shall build, with my

pen and my intelligence, a towering monument of the world's obscene follies, its gibbering manias, the despairing hallucinations it calls life and love, its mouthing of catch-words: god and honour and faith—of all these I shall build such a vast and terrifying work, my Mitzl, that the world would be driven screaming mad if it were not already so . . . and this I shall do with you, my Mitzl, and for you. . . .”

He lowered his face again to the satin lap and for a while kept it there, smiling like a child in a dream. Then, slowly, reluctantly, he arose.

“And now to work . . . to build that hideous monument. . . . You will be proud, no, when it is done? . . . You will be, I am sure, because you know that I labour only for you. . . . So; we go to work for my Mitzl. . . .”

He bent over and his lips rested on the real, scented hair.

“But first, I have a small surprise for you, Mitzl, my love. I know that sometimes you grow bored, watching your Ernst at work; listening to him tell of his great plans . . . no; do not speak, Mitzl . . . do not tell me how happy and proud you are to sit here, tirelessly

in the night, hour after hour . . . wait first until I show you my surprise. . . .”

From the tall, carved wardrobe he brought his padded hammer and chisel and went to the wooden box, marked: Books.

XXXIII

THERE was a tavern in a village twenty kilometres outside of Vienna. It was snugly set among trees in a gently-rolling plain of farms. There was a courtyard with a stone-cased well, where the horses and oxen could rest and feed while their masters did the same inside. The tavern-keeper was a practitioner of the best principles of the Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern, without its sworn violence. That is, with a true community of interests, he traded beer and wine for eggs, poultry and meat or allowed credit against market-day. Rough meals were served, but the farmers might bring their own cheese and sausage and coarse bread if they chose. The owner preferred them not to bring

their own bottles. There really was small excuse, for his were good and cheap. There was a fiddler who would scrape his battered fiddle for a litre of beer; or who would refrain from doing so for a like amount. Altogether, an enjoyable retreat.

Kuno and the Baroness had discovered the place an afternoon when he drove her, in her smart car, into the countryside. When they also discovered that the proprietor's wife was a cook skilful beyond the sturdy meals of the peasant, they returned and frequently. The days of their hit-or-miss free meals had robbed the smart restaurants in Vienna of their charm for Kuno and the Baroness. Besides, it was no longer necessary to make a pretence of affluence. What is more: they felt that in this out-of-the-way place they were unknown. This was not entirely true. The tavern-keeper had heard of them, and the Professor, when he went to Vienna and hoch-Meyered into the Bruder-Bund councils. It made no difference in his broad, communistic view: aristocrats were as welcome as peasants in his place. Especially, aristocrats with bulging wallets.

It really made no difference to Kuno and the Baroness. They sat cheerily at a table placed in the courtyard, under the friendly stars. They accepted, with that becoming air of theirs, the informality of the Professor's domestic arrangement which placed them always together. They were genuinely worried over his peculiar behaviour, but worry, even sorrow, becomes stale as an old jest, over which one can smile but reminiscently and feebly. They surprised themselves by an occasional, almost dutiful, reference to him, and ascribed it to the change made in their own viewpoint by the trusting innocence of the Professor. The change had persisted. Kuno spoke of him this evening as they sat in the tavern courtyard.

"Sorry I couldn't persuade Ernst to come along," said Kuno. "He'd enjoy this place."

"He's very happy, I'm sure," the Baroness replied, "locked up in his study, cataloguing the more violent vagaries of the race."

"He's working too hard. He's not looking as well as he did, you know."

"He won't take a holiday until his book is written. I've asked him."

"I know it. He told me he thought you were becoming restless. He even suggested that you might enjoy the Riviera for a change."

"With you, of course."

"With me . . . of course."

He poured garnet wine into the solid tumblers before them.

"What can we do, Kuno?"

"What haven't we done? You've exerted your wiles on him until I've blushed and I've made suggestions to him that are beyond blushing."

"Doesn't he ever stop watchin his parade of idiots long enough to analyse his own mind?"

"I told you long ago; last spring, in fact," Kuno reminded her, "of the shoeless condition of the cobbler's children; to say nothing of the cobbler himself."

"Just the same: I wish he would."

"You'd wish he hadn't."

"But why?"

"The Professor himself has explained to me that self-analysis is always most dangerous. In fact, that's how he got Fräulein Vera. By the

way: have you asked her about her engaging dementia?"

"No, Kuno; I didn't want to ask."

"Too bad. I'm curious about the bright mania behind those slumbering, slanted eyes."

"I want her to be friendly. We need her, for Ernst. . . ."

"He's always grumbling at her. Worse than ever."

"It's his healthiest symptom," said the Baroness; then, suddenly: "Kuno, I'm afraid."

"Afraid? Of what?"

"Of him, Kuno."

"Pshaw, he's still paralysed at the sight of you."

"I know. It's not that. Yes, it is, too. But it's when I'm not with him, when he's in that room alone. And last night . . ."

"You're getting nerves, Mitzl."

"I've earned them. Listen, Kuno: last night he came into my bedroom——"

"Well, after all, one's husband——"

"Please be serious. Last night he'd been in his study alone. He was there long after you brought me home. It was just before dawn and

he came into my bedroom, like . . . like a man walking in his sleep . . .”

“You’re sure?”

“Please, Kuno. I was afraid to speak. He had a pen in his hand. It looked like a dagger. It wasn’t . . . only a pen, a long quill pen. He looked straight at me, but I’m convinced he didn’t see me . . . and he held up the pen and muttered something . . . something about building a monument for me. . . .”

She closed her eyes. Kuno watched her over the tumbler’s rim. He was serious, but he attempted to conceal it.

“It’s barely possible,” he said, “that we should have our dreams analysed. Now Freud says——”

“All right, then: I dreamed it,” said the Baroness. “But we won’t consult Freud.”

“A pity. He’s pretty good at that sort of thing. Did Ernst say what manner of monument he was going to build?”

“He said it would be an Attila tower of skulls, only not empty like Attila’s, but murmuring the way sea-shells murmur with the horrors that once occupied them.”

"Here's dinner," said Kuno. "Stuffed peppers and, ah, a real *Schnitzel!*"

XXXIV

WHAT began that long-ago spring afternoon in Vienna, and lasted through the summer, drew swiftly to its end the day Professor Volk received notification that he had been awarded the Nobel prize. The message was forwarded to the Clinic, where the Professor was engaged with a demonstration before a group of advanced students. He was called from his task, respectfully, to receive the congratulations of his colleagues, which he did with the calm that they might have expected. He prepared to return to his advanced students.

"You're not going back to your classroom?" asked Dr. Herbst.

"My demonstration has not been completed."

"But on an occasion like this," Dr. Herbst continued. "It's not every year one receives the Nobel prize."

“And it is not every year that the Nobel jury finds a Volk to distinguish its verdict.”

He not only concluded his demonstration, thereby impressing greatly the advanced students—each of whom resolved to behave in the same manner when he won the Nobel prize—but he dawdled over the sorting of routine reports, which, honestly, he might have postponed until the next week.

It was evening, and growing dark, when he finally decided to leave the Clinic building. He had forgotten the Nobel award as completely as he was wont to forget his rubbers when he entered the Clinic cloakroom. In the cloakroom were three of his colleagues. Ordinarily, he would have ignored them. They were bent over, smiling at something they saw in a journal that Dr. Herbst was holding. The other two were Dr. Schlager and Dr. Ludwig Karpis. Dr. Karpis was a psychiatrist so distinguished that he had once, if only once, dared to dispute openly Professor Volk's theory of the thrice-chambered complexity of what had hitherto been termed the dual chamber of the mind. Still the Professor would have ignored them, but——

The journal over which they were bent, and smiling, was *Die Wochenente*. As he recognised it, the Professor's eyes grew cold.

"Ach!" he exclaimed, with such violence, they jumped.

"Ach, an inspiring sight, indeed. A group of alleged scientists stuffing the insatiable hollows of their minds with scandal, with *pfennig*-a-reputation gossip——"

"But, Professor Volk——"

"Shut up, Herbst! I've always known that you were nothing but a gabby old woman . . . and you, Schlager, are a frustrated and senile scavenger . . . but to find you, Dr. Karpis——"

"Hold on there now," said Dr. Karpis.

"To find you, for whom in my tolerance I have clung to a shred of respect . . . to find you gobbling this putrid swill like a starving swine——"

"Look here, Volk, you can't talk to me like that."

"You heard me: swine."

"You can't, even if you do set yourself up as the greatest psychiatrist of the age. Nobel prize or no Nobel prize, I won't——"

"Swine," repeated the Professor. "Sow!"

"You'll answer for this!" shouted Dr. Karpis. "I challenge you, sir, to a duel!"

Professor Volk bowed, with elaborate mockery.

"As the challenged person," he said, "I have the choice of weapons."

"Name them, sir."

"I might suggest a duel of intelligence . . . but, no; that would not be fair . . . to destroy an unarmed man . . ."

"Don't try to dodge."

"You may choose the weapons," said the Professor, ready to leave.

"Swords!" screamed Dr. Karpis. "Sabres! . . . Pistols! . . . Stiletos! . . ."

Professor Volk bowed again from the doorway and was gone.

.

He started to walk toward his apartment. The rage of Dr. Karpis had helped to cool his own, but the uneasy flame continued to flicker

somewhere inside him. Yet he might have dismissed the incident, with Nobel and his rubbers, had it not been for *Die Wochenente*. The latest issue, the one they had been looking at in the cloakroom, had reached the street that evening.

Everywhere he turned, *Die Wochenente* leered at him. It was spread on magazine-stands and in the windows of tobacco shops. A newsboy thrust one fairly in his face and squeaked with fear as it was struck from his hand. Every man sitting in front of the coffee-houses he passed appeared to be reading one of the newly-issued *Wochenenten*. He collided with a pair of giggling shop-girls who shared a copy as they went down the pavement. A coachman from the Ringstrasse sat humped over a copy on his box. . . .

It was imagination, of course, that made him feel that every one of the readers peeked from behind the outspread sheets to smile suggestively after him, to nudge each other and exchange whispers and winks as he passed. It must have been imagination, because in that issue of *Die Wochenente*, for the first time in seven weeks, there was neither a snapshot of Kuno and the

Baroness nor any item about them; not so much as an interrogatory hint in the question-marked column. . . .

Imagination. Yet to the Professor: all Vienna was laughing at him. He turned into his own *Strasse* with the feeling that he was escaping a merciless gauntlet. The *Strasse* was dark, its shadows deepened by the street-lamps that lighted as he went toward his apartment. A figure emerged from the dark of the apartment doorway.

"No, no!" exclaimed the Professor. "Go away!"

He made a frantic gesture as if to brush off this latest menace. Then he mumbled as he recognised Willi Zimmerkopf's grin under the light of the street-lamp. It was an idiotic grin, but remarkably sympathetic.

"I am sorry, Willi," said the Professor. "I was . . . ach, I was lost in thought."

"I was clumsy," said Willi, "to come popping out at you."

"What are you doing here at this hour?"

"I just delivered the——"

"How stupid of me to forget."

"It was pretty quick work, Ernst. And a fine job, if I do say so myself—but where will you find an abler critic? You see, having a chance to model from the living subject—well, I guess it inspired me or something."

"You are a great artist, Willi."

"Great? I'm superb!"

"Of course, Willi . . . I have another duty for you."

"Not another figure, Ernst. Not right away. I couldn't. Doing this last one in such a hurry, with the inspiration driving me day and night has me worn out. Honest, it has."

"Not a figure this time——"

"A bronze?" Willi was eager. "I would forget my weariness . . . such a bronze I would cast for you! And a new preparation for staining them . . . it will become known as *Kimmerkopf verdigris*. . . ."

"Soon you will make me a bronze," said the Professor. "Perhaps very soon. But at present there is another task: I want you to be my second in a duel."

Willi grinned his delight and gurgled.

"You like that, Willi, no? Dr. Karpis's seconds

are calling on me in the morning. I will send them to you."

"What weapons?"

"It makes no difference. I can't be killed."

"You can't—what?"

"My work has made me immortal. Tomorrow then, Willi . . . and good evening. . . ."

The Professor entered his apartment. Willi Zimmerkopf, grinning, stood under the light of the street-lamp. He started to walk away, to leave the *Strasse*. He halted and gazed up and down the thoroughfare. He darted across the street and disappeared in the shadows of formal shrubbery in a yard that faced the Professor's apartment. There was a light in the Professor's study.

XXXV

FRAULEIN VERA was in the study instead of in the ante-room, where usually she awaited the return of the Professor. A new wooden box, again marked: Books, lay on the floor. Her curiosity was not exhausted, it was merely

numbed, by the repetition of this mysterious delivery at the hands of the leering workman who obviously was something more than a workman; who gabbled of art on the slightest pretext and who would not discuss his mission on any pretext whatever. Fräulein Vera finally had made up her mind that it had brought her a ragged sort of peace.

The Professor, muttering to himself, entered the ante-room, paused and came slowly into his study. His eyes stared past her as she stepped forward to meet him. He ignored her greeting and went to his desk, his back towards her.

"It's late," he said. "Why are you still here?"

"Most of all, I wanted to congratulate you on receiving the Nobel award. May I?"

"Yes, although it's silly. You could have done it in the morning."

"That's another reason I waited: to tell you that I won't be here in the morning."

"You will not be here? . . . Nonsense! . . ."

"No, Professor Volk . . . I'm l-leaving——"

At first he seemed not to have heard her. Then he turned quickly.

"What is this? . . . Leaving? . . ."

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"I can't work with you any longer."

"You can't leave me. You can't!"

She was facing him, pale, struggling for courage.

"All right then, leave me!" he shouted. "I suppose you think you can bully me. . . . Well, you can't! . . . Do you imagine that you are so important that I cannot do without you? . . . that I'll be helpless with you not here to tell me it's raining and I should wear my rubbers?"

She smiled at that, despite the desperation with which she sought to control her expression. She said:

"I've known for a long while that I'd have to leave."

"And you kept it a secret from me, no? . . . Leave then . . . do not talk!"

"The real reason I waited was for the Nobel award to become official."

"You like to believe, no, that you had something to do with that? That, because you filled the ink-well and bought the writing-paper it was really you who wrote the great works of Professor Volk? You would like to believe you helped, no?"

"I would like to," she said, "but I know I didn't."

"My books are mine! As for the Nobel prize—pah, you could have it."

He fumbled in his inner breast-pocket and brought out the relayed telegram from Stockholm.

"This means nothing," he said. "Look!"

He took it between the fingers of both hands as if to tear it to pieces. He didn't tear it. He shook it in front of Fräulein Vera's face.

"Do you know why I value this at all? I'll tell you: because it will please the Baroness; because she will be proud."

"That's the real reason I'm leaving—your wife."

"Ach, now it comes out." He crowed. "Jealousy! Fräulein Vera—pardon me, doctor; I should say: Dr. Vera Petrovanof . . . Dr. Petrovanof, then, the ambitious student of the mind; the talented scholar in psychiatry; assistant to the celebrated Volk himself—this gifted disciple, who really wrote out the learned treatises to which Volk signed his name, admits jealousy like a flighty, love-sick schoolgirl."

The Professor paused, reaching for crueller words. His face reminded her of Willi Zimmerkopf, leering, as he went on:

"I warned you fairly—it was in fact the agreement under which I allowed you to become my assistant—not to fall in love with me."

"I have not forgotten," she said. "And I didn't——"

"You are in love with me now."

"I didn't fall in love with you," she said, "as long as I respected you."

"Ach, she makes epigrams."

"I knew I could rely on such a shrewd psychiatrist as yourself to understand it. I sublimated my love. You know that primer process of the mind. I made you my god. I gave you divinity. And I worshipped you!"

"And now," he asked, quite simply and rather hurt, "you no longer . . . worship me?"

"No; I only pity you . . . and love you. . . ."

"You pity me? . . . Me? . . ."

"And I must go away."

"But you love me?"

He sensed that he was defeating her, reaching through the armour of her resolution.

"You do love me?"

"Madly."

"That is a word psychiatrists do not use lightly."

"That's why I've used it."

"And you also pity me. Why, Vera?"

"Will you listen? Will you listen to the truth?"

"Always. If you wish I will make notes."

As he spoke he sat at his desk, assuming the posture of a physician about to consider the symptoms of a patient.

"Don't mock me," said Fräulein Vera. "Only listen, as a scientist; as you would listen to one of your students."

"Ach, psychology?"

"Your own—and the truth. You've dodged the truth, but you're going to hear it at last. You've dodged it since you first met her . . . your shabby, down-at-heel Baroness——"

"I am listening, but as a scientist . . . be careful."

"Just so you listen. Since you met her, you have denied the truth. You have denied reason itself. You, the great psychiatrist, Volk, to

whom the minds of men and women are open books—simple as the A-B-C's, you like to say—have ceased to use your own mind. You have blinded yourself to facts simpler than the A-B-C's. You won't recognise what every one in Vienna, down to the meanest street-sweeper, saw at a glance——”

“This,” the Professor broke in, “smacks of *Die Wochenente*.”

“Suppose it does? I used *Die Wochenente* to try to help you. Even *Die Wochenente* couldn't miss truth in your case——”

“Ach, so I'm a ‘case.’ ”

“A forlorn case . . . and down in your heart, deep in the subconscious, you *know*.”

“I know? What do I know?”

XXXVI

FRAULEIN VERA trembled with the effort to steady herself; to keep her voice clear and calm.

“You know that the Baroness and her paramour, Graf Adelhorst, have tricked you; that they are tricking you right now, behind your

back . . . and not bothering to go behind your back. Why should they, when you're so willing to shut your eyes and stop your ears? . . . So willing to throw yourself into a traumatic hypnosis; to anæsthetise your intelligence so it cannot feel the pain of truth. . . ."

The Professor was listening, too intently, with the leer that was like Willi Zimmerkopf's.

"I have listened patiently," he said. "But this is not scientific discourse, despite your half-versed mouthings. That you are a pseudo-scientist does not conceal the fact that your utterances are those of woman jealousy."

"I'm not jealous. Why should I be?"

"Because I love her."

Fräulein Vera laughed. Despite herself, there was an over-note of hysteria in the laugh.

"You don't love her," she said.

"You lie!"

He yelled it, rising to his feet.

"If you loved her, you wouldn't deny my words so violently——"

"Liar! I love her! . . . Do you hear: I love her!"

She laughed again, her charge confirmed by

the desperation of his cry.

"Shouting those words," she said, "doesn't deceive me—and it doesn't really deceive you. Wake up, man. Listen to the voice of your intelligence if not to mine. You don't love her. You love something that doesn't exist, a creature of your sick imagination——"

"Quiet!"

His voice was a cracked roar. He stepped toward her, threateningly. Fräulein Vera did not wince. She had won. Carried on by her triumph, she said:

"You love a false idol, created in her image . . . an image that lives only in your mind . . ."

"Liar! . . . Traitor! . . . Spy! . . ."

"A madman's dream!"

His voice choked. He rose above her, lifting his hand to strike. Fräulein Vera raised her face, stiff with courage. And he struck her, with all his strength. A back-handed blow across the mouth. He stepped back, stunned by what he had done.

Fräulein Vera smiled. Her long, dark eyes shone through sudden tears. A dribble of blood came from her lips.

"Ernst!" she said softly.

"Now go!"

"Now," she replied, in quiet ecstasy. "Now I can never leave you . . . Ernst!"

And, speaking his name, she ran from the study and out of the apartment. Professor Volk stood, staring after her, his arms hanging loosely. He shuffled across the room to the bronze likeness of Saritza Michaelis. He touched his fingers fondly to the pretty head. The telegram from Stockholm still was in his hand. He looked at it, trying to remember what it was. . . .

"I must tell the Baroness," he muttered. "I must tell her about the Nobel award. . . . She will be proud . . . very proud. . . ."

Absently, he caressed the bronze head again and started slowly for the heavy folding doors that divided his study from the living quarters of the apartment.

XXXVII

THE private suite of the Baroness was done in the modern manner by a firm of Viennese

decorators who had not lost their heads in the fashionable stampede. Which is to say, they had achieved Platonic practicality without suggesting a chromium and crystal jail. Their modern chairs could be sat in without the sensation that they would dump the sitter on to the zebra-hide rug. This security is very important to the most casual sitter and is one consistently overlooked by those craftsmen who think a panel of hand-burnished *lignum-vitae* and a Tanagra of twisted tin are in themselves sufficient.

In a corner of the bedroom hung a curtain with a solitary design—a shaggy centaur, rearing, reaching for a sprinting dryad—in smooth, ivory lines on a jade background. The curtain screened the entrance to the boudoir of the Baroness. The boudoir was designed around a fireplace on the far side of the room. It was designed entirely for comfort. It achieved this in soft-cushioned chairs and a lounge, in low-shaded lamps and a long, double shelf presenting the vari-hued backs of books which, these Viennese decorators were clever enough to know, are the friendliest of decorations. A solitary picture, painted in the colours of

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twilight, showed a glade among hamadryads reaching their leafy arms toward Narcissus, bending over a pool that reflected the hidden sky like a copper mirror. It wasn't a Klimt, but it was in the manner of Klimt and effectively done.

In this snug room the Baroness often sat, anticipating the enjoyment she would have of her books if she ever got around to reading them or contemplating the unhappy bliss of Narcissus or just sitting. There she was pleased to have cocktails for the Professor and Kuno on the rare evenings when they all dined together. These evenings had grown ever rarer. It had been two weeks since the Professor had joined them in the chummy ceremony.

Kuno came in from a small door which opened into the main hallway of the apartment. They planned to dine again that evening at the tavern in the country.

"Ah, cocktails," Kuno said, "you are thoughtful, Mitzl."

"You are amiable," she responded, "to appear surprised."

"A cocktail is always a charming novelty.

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That is to say, a good cocktail.”

She handed it to him, standing, and lifted her own glass.

“No use waiting for Ernst, I suppose,” she said.

“I think not. I just passed his study door and he was—well, he was going pretty strong, from the sound.”

“Again? Kuno, we’ve got to do something. I’m worried about him.”

Kuno nodded over his cocktail.

“I know. I’ve just about decided: when this book is done you and he will go into Provence. Just you and he . . .”

“You know he won’t go without you.”

“I’ve thought of that, too. In detail. I’ll start out with you, but when we arrive . . . say at Carcassonne—great place, Carcassonne: up-to-date hotel in the old walled town and a natural champagne . . . ah . . . it bears on its homely bottles a single phrase: ‘The sun makes me sing’ . . .”

“When we arrive in Carcassonne?” she prompted him.

“I’ll become ill and return to Vienna and

Ernst will have a real honeymoon. I'm not even sure we should wait for him to finish his book."

"Let's not, Kuno. No book can be important enough to risk a man's health or happiness. Let's. . . . Let's kidnap him, make him go. I'm serious, Kuno."

"And I."

"And I'm afraid . . . really afraid of him."

"Has he——?"

"Not since that terrible night. But sometimes I feel him looking at me, thinking, and sort of talking to himself without any sound. I can't stand it, Kuno. . . ."

Her voice quavered. Her hand shook and spilled some of the drink on her gown.

"Steady, Mitzl."

Kuno stooped over and dabbed with his handkerchief at the spots the liquor had made.

"I don't mean to——"

He stood up before her, frightened by her emotion.

"B-but I'm afraid—oh, Kuno!"

She suddenly put her arms around him; clung to him, trembling. Kuno held her and patted her bare shoulder.

"There, there, darling," murmured Kuno, for even sophisticates speak so in such a moment. "Everything'll be all right."

He continued to hold her, patting her shoulder.

.

Professor Volk, still shaken from the scene with Fräulein Vera, rolled back the folding doors and walked down the long hallway of the apartment. He passed the tall clock that stood midway in the hall. He glanced at its face and automatically took out his own watch. When he had passed, he was unaware of the hour. He walked past the small entrance to the boudoir and stopped before the bedroom door. He waited, steadying himself before he knocked lightly. There was no answer.

"Mitzl." His voice was scarcely above a whisper. "Mitzl."

He opened the door and entered the empty bedroom, resisting the sensation of panic that seized him at the threshold. Her absence re-

assured him. He stood, as he might have stood before a shrine, taking in the intimate symbols of the saint who dwelt there. From the corner of the room the rearing centaur challenged his eye. The Professor walked toward the curtain of ivory-and-jade, reluctantly, fearful of the reality it might conceal; loath to leave the ideal spot which held her spirit rather than her body.

His hand closed over the questing hands of the centaur. He drew aside the curtain, smiling bashfully. He stiffened, the smile frozen on his face, at what he saw beyond the curtain:

The Baroness in Kuno's arms. They stood, profiled against the mellow light of the fireplace. There was no mistaking the confident possession with which Kuno held her nor the tenderness of his voice. Nor yet the confident surrender of her body to his clasp; a posture that seemed eloquent of many surrenders. . . .

The ivory-and-jade curtain dropped into its slender folds again. The centaur once more stretched his arms after the nymph in rout. The telegram had dropped from the Professor's nerveless hand. He stooped and picked it up. When he stood again, his shoulders were bent.

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His eyes, which had lied to him of the truth, were vacant. His face was expressionless with melancholy too long endured.

He walked like a somnambulist back across the bedroom and down the long hallway. The tall clock, chiming the hour, marked time for his stiff-legged march. Seven o'clock. He closed the folding doors and walked to his desk. He sat, heavily, staring straight before him, waiting for the cold turmoil of his senses to subside.

He still was sitting there when Kuno and the Baroness went out. He heard them, laughing quietly as they came down the hallway, but gave no sign. Nor did he move as they stopped outside his door, whispered, and rapped. They rapped a second time. Then he heard the outer door close.

He reached into a lower drawer of his desk and brought out an automatic pistol. He went to the window and, from behind the three curtains, peered down at them. They were getting into the smart automobile. The car started, rolling down the lamp-lit *Strasse*.

The Professor went back to his desk. He placed the pistol on top of the telegram that

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had come from Stockholm. His empty eyes brooded on the symbolic group. . . .

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Across the street, Willi Zimmerkopf's idiot grin raised from the shadow of the hedge. Willi had seen the Professor's arm lifted to strike. He had observed the hurried departure of Fräulein Vera and the arrival of Graf Adelhorst. He had watched the departure of the Graf with the Baroness. And he had detected, behind the curtains, the spying figure of the Professor. Willi Zimmerkopf whimpered. . . .

XXXVIII

THE clock in the hallway chimed eleven, far off. The lights in the study were dimmed. The wooden box was no longer in the room. Out of the half-dark peered the nineteen bronze faces. The bong-bong of the clock seemed to reach the consciousness of the motionless figure at the desk.

The Professor's features were etched with the fierce struggle he had been through. Especially his miserable eyes. The final bong-g. He arose slowly, stiffly. He put the pistol in his pocket and picked up the telegram. He went over to the ledge where Saritza Michaelis's bright face smiled up out of the gloom.

"She was right," the Professor muttered. "Vera was right . . . poor Vera, and I struck her . . . because she dared tell me the truth. . . . It was the truth: I have been blind; but blind because I wanted to be . . . because I am master of my own intelligence as I am over the minds of others . . . because I am able to control it; to make it tell lies, if it is lies I wish to hear . . . I am the master."

He patted the head of Saritza Michaelis, as if in apology, and moved it. From the tiny compartment it covered he took the key to his secret chamber. He stood in front of the door, as he had before entering the bedroom of the Baroness. He straightened his tie and coat before he slid the concealed panel back on its smooth groove. He remained for a moment, silhouetted against the oblong of light from within the chamber.

He went in. The panel slid noiselessly back and was locked.

The figure of the Baroness was not in its usual position beside the writing-table. It was seated, in a lounging attitude, at the end of a spacious divan. Dim light, from over the table, gave warmth to the waxen smile and softness to the contours under the rich gown. The Professor spoke softly:

"Mitzl; ah, my Mitzl. To-night you are more beautiful than ever, and to-night, more than ever, I need you . . . the comfort of your understanding; the touch of your kindly hand. . . . Your Ernst is weary; weary beyond words with the false world outside . . . the world that wants to crush our own true and better world. All my life I have looked into the little, evil minds of men and women . . . but to-day—ach, pity me, sweet my Mitzl—to-day I have looked into my own . . ."

He swayed and shrugged with the effort to hold himself on his feet. His voice was very gentle and very tired. He held out the telegram.

"Here is a small gift for you, dear Mitzl. The Nobel prize. It is for you, darling . . . all I have

done is for you. You are proud, no, of your Ernst? . . . Ach, you are sweet . . . and now I am really rewarded, because you are so pleased and proud. . . .”

He went closer to the divan, placing his hand on its back to steady himself.

“You will be still prouder, my Mitzl. What I have done is nothing to what I will do for you . . . with you . . . I will create a tower high as Babel with man’s sick dreams and his stupid vices. It will reveal the resounding folly of existence so thoroughly that only the preoccupied madness of those who look upon it will save them from complete, jibbering annihilation . . . such a book I will write that only I, and perhaps two others, will be able to understand it.”

The sound of his words, and the fervour they aroused, strengthened him. He bent closer over the form on the divan.

“But not to-night, Mitzl. No work to-night, yes? No; to-night we will sit close, you and I, and you will rest me with your arms . . . ach, lovely Mitzl . . . may I? . . .”

He seated himself on the divan beside the graceful figure. He put his arm about its waist

and his head on its shoulder.

"So," he said. "So I sit with my Mitzl, my wife; my wife who is so proud of her Ernst . . . my darling . . ."

His arm closed tightly about the figure. His fingers stroked the white throat. He raised his face, reaching for the lips with his own——

The house-bell rang.

"Who can it be, Mitzl?" he asked, relaxing his embrace. He glanced at his watch.

"But, of course," he said. "It must be Kuno. It is always Kuno, is it not, my dear?"

He glanced at her slyly. The bell rang again.

"Ah, the Graf Adelhorst grows impatient," he said, his voice becoming as sly as the look he fixed on her. "Why doesn't he use his latch-key? . . . Come, Baroness, do not feign innocence so broadly . . . surely you did not think I was unaware of the fact that you have given him a latch-key . . ."

He chortled as the bell rang a third time.

"I'll let the bashful fellow in," he said.

The Professor rose and went to the huge wardrobe against the wall.

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Downstairs, at the street entrance to the apartment, Kathi the housekeeper opened the wicket in the door. She gasped and dropped back. Framed in the wicket was a wild-eyed head that grinned idiotically.

"I must see Professor Volk," he said. "At once."

"No, no," cried Kathi, "you can't . . . he's not home . . . he's sleeping . . . go away . . ."

"Let me in!" The leer was appalling. "Let me in!"

"Go away! . . . or I'll call the police. . . ."

"No! Don't——!"

Kathi slammed the wicket on the nightmare face and ran back to her room. Willi rang the bell again and kicked at the door. Then Willi scuttled back to the covert of shadows across the street.

XXXIX

THE Professor opened the long door of the wardrobe and beamed into its shadows. He postured in stiff caricatures of formality and his words

were italicised with irony. Altogether, at that moment, he was behaving like an old-fashioned villain of the movies. This was strange, because in Vienna quite a cultural point is made of ignoring the cinema. The Professor bowed.

"Ach, Kuno, my good friend!" he cried. "Or should I say, our good friend? At any rate, don't stand there, my boy. You must know that you are welcome, even if the Baroness and I were having a quiet little evening together, alone . . . Come in, come in . . ."

He swung back the second door of the wardrobe. Standing inside, immaculate in evening clothes, silk hat, stick and cape, stood Kuno as created by Willi Zimmerkopf. The second of Willi's figures was convincingly life-like in the meagre light. The Professor led the figure of Kuno into the room, removing the hat, stick and cape.

"Yes; come in, Excellenz," he said. "You must be quite worn out after a day devoted to tennis and swimming and winning gentlemen's steeplechases and all those peculiar activities with which you so diligently prove your masculinity . . . is it, then, such a precious and

such a fragile possession, Kuno? There are other exercises worthy of a man, my friend. For instance, the exercise of the mind . . . but, of course, there are no silver cups for such achievement . . . only trifling trophies, such as the Nobel prize . . .”

He had brought the Kuno effigy to the divan. He held it erect before that of the Baroness.

“It is Kuno, sweetheart,” he said. “Kuno who climbs mountains without the imagination to become dizzy and sits on the backs of horses while they jump over sticks . . . you are pleased to see him, no, darling? . . .”

He chuckled and looked into the features of Kuno. . . .

“Don’t be misled by her air of coolness, Excellenz. It is the poise of the aristocrat with, perhaps, just a tinge of hypocrisy . . . very well-mannered hypocrisy, though . . . but I forget: you are also of the nobility and also poised and well-mannered and hypocritical . . . come, sit down . . . you don’t mind, Baroness?”

He seated the figure of Kuno beside the other on the broad divan.

“Yet under her cloak of manners, the Baroness

is as human as Lina, the maid; Lina, with her simple, shocking dreams and her butcher's boy. . . . You do not believe it? . . . Then look . . ."

He pretended to pinch the waxen cheek.

"Ah, there, Mitzl, old girl . . . you are peevish, no, because we were interrupted in our love-making? . . . See, Excellenz? . . . She giggles and blushes . . . just like Lina. . . . Or perhaps you knew of this delightful failing . . . perhaps you even know about Lina . . . no? . . . careful, Excellenz, the butcher's boy is also very masculine. . . ."

He stood back from them in a pose of admiration. His eyes, though, were glittering and a savage note grew in his voice.

"A very handsome pair," he said. "Very handsome, very well-bred and very vicious. . . . Ach, you must not be shocked at my pleasantries. . . . Here we are, all together: old friends in a world of our own; where we may speak freely and act freely and not have to conceal our thoughts hypocritically, as we must in the world of maniacs outside. . . . So let us chat with intelligence, my friends, or is that too much to ask of you? . . ."

He smiled elaborately into the realistic faces.

"The Baroness, my wife," he said, "and the Graf Adelhorst, my best friend. . . . We are not quite original, are we? . . . But how may I expect originality from you two, especially anything so original as decency? . . . No; we make a stale drama, my friends . . . and I am too fitly cast in the always comic rôle of the betrayed husband—ach, no, Baroness; do not bother to protest. . . . Remember, my dear, your poise. . . ."

He chuckled. His excitement was growing. His eyes glared feverishly and there was a line of perspiration along his upper lip.

"But not entirely comic," he said, "and not entirely betrayed. Because, you see, I knew from the first—ach, yes, Kuno; I knew even that first day in spring when I told you I could read a woman's mind—like A-B-Cs, and remember?—and you smiled; of course, I knew . . .

"And I knew how you planned the wedding . . . how you plotted, Kuno, to go with us to Schilzwalden . . . how you tried to shame me at the Goat's Foot with your masculine bravado. . . . Do you think I was not aware of what

would happen if I left you alone in Switzerland? . . . I planned that! . . . And the letter I got from the guide, Lewi—you did not know Lewi had written me, did you?—only told me what I already knew . . . except, of course, that you assaulted Lewi . . . that was a diverting and oblique manifestation of chivalry, Kuno: to defend so valiantly the fair name you had been to such pains to smirch . . .”

His chuckle broke wildly. The careful attitude of restraint was becoming too much for him.

“Of course, I know,” he cried. “You ask: Why didn’t I do something? What did you expect, my feeble conspirators? . . . Did you expect me, Professor Volk, to act out the farce like some hollow-headed husband? . . . To rush to the courts? . . . To challenge you, Kuno, to a duel, or hire detectives? . . . make more delightful items for *Die Wochenente*? . . .

“Ach, no, my friends. I have tolerated your clumsy affair . . . I have encouraged it . . . because for a while it made such a clear, if not always interesting, case history of human behaviour. . . . You have been specimens. . . .

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Specimens, do you hear? . . . Like dead beetles that are stuck on a card by some entomologist . . . dead, poisonous beetles . . .”

He sobbed as his fury possessed him.

“You two laugh at me? . . . Pah! . . . Dead beetles do not laugh as the entomologist takes them apart, precisely, with small instruments . . . as I have taken you apart . . . I was the one who was laughing . . . I, do you understand? . . . I laughed at your vain struttings . . . when you tried to humiliate me—I laughed! . . . I am laughing now . . . why don’t you laugh, my so-clever friends? . . . does it spoil the taste of your plot to know that you have been outwitted? . . . that I am the one who laughs . . . ha-ha-ha . . . come, laugh with me . . . ha-ha-ha-ha-ha . . . laugh . . . surely you are sportsmen enough to laugh even if it turns out the joke is on you . . . ha-ha . . . laugh! . . . laugh! ha-ha-ha . . .”

And he laughed; a high, broken laugh that began like a scream and died strangling in his throat.

.

Across the street, Willi Zimmerkopf paced the shadows like a distracted animal; an animal who

scents prey or peril. Willi leered at the curtained windows, trembling, and whimpered. . . .

XL

THE Professor's fury had exhausted itself and him. He tried to regain the cooler, ironic mood in which he had begun. He could not. His words came in a hoarse whisper. His eyes were glazed. He leaned against his work-table and sneered at the two figures.

"Deceived?" he panted. "Me deceived? Let me show you how much I was deceived. You thought I was alone, no, eating out my heart. Ha-ha. . . . It was I who was deceiving you. . . . Sorry, Baroness; I know it hurts your pride . . . and it hurts your pride, too, no, Kuno? . . . but it is true, my gay conspirators . . . true . . ."

He clung to the table and his head went back, groggily. He groaned and, with weary effort, pulled himself upright.

"Yes, I have had my sweetheart," he said wearily. "One whom I knew before I knew

you two . . . you might like to meet her? . . . Why not? . . . There is no need now for the petty conventionalities, especially that of hypocrisy. . . .”

He stood away from the table, swayed, and then straightened himself.

“Vera!” he called. “Come, darling . . . meet the Baroness and Graf Adelhorst . . .”

He turned, smiling crookedly, to the figures on the divan.

“Vera is so shy,” he explained. “Such illustrious names, you know . . . even though she insists that decayed nobility is no longer venerated in her country . . . perhaps I had best fetch her . . . excuse me, please, a moment. . . .”

His feet dragged to the wooden box marked: Books, which earlier he had shoved into the room. Its lid already had been pried loose. He raised the lid and lifted to its feet Willi Zimmerkopf’s masterpiece: an incredibly faithful representation of Fräulein Vera. Willi had studied the living model. He had been inspired.

“Come, Vera, darling, and join us,” he said tenderly. “It is just a friendly, family party, my dear.”

The Professor put his arm around the figure's waist and turned to the divan.

"Now our little drama begins to amount to something," he said. "More originality, no? A betrayed husband betrays his faithless wife. Charming, no?"

He fondled the likeness of Vera.

"We have been sweethearts a long time, Vera and I," he said. "Sweethearts not only with our emotions, but with our minds. That is a refinement of love I am afraid you two will never enjoy . . . it is unfortunate. . . . Yet Vera was enough the primitive female to be jealous of the Baroness . . . imagine that. . . . Do you know how Vera was convinced of my love for her? . . . When I struck her, in anger . . . and made her pretty little mouth bleed. . . . There is a name for that in psychopathology . . . I won't bore you with it. . . ."

He clasped the figure of Vera ardently. His eyes remained on the other two.

"Let me kiss that pretty little mouth, my darling," he said. "Let my lips heal the bruise made by my angry fists. . . . Ach, that's right: put your dear arms around me. . . . What's that?

... You want to whisper something? ...”

He placed his ear to her lips, listened, and laughed.

“But of course, Vera, my little dove ... such infatuation as theirs is the dry crust of love compared to ours ... pah, the amoeba, the lowest form of animal life except for humans, manages the business much more admirably. ... But we must not be rude, my sweet ... come, join us ... you do not mind, Baroness? Or you, Graf Adelhorst? ... Good! ... We must be broad, no, in our views?”

He carried the figure of Vera to the divan and placed it beside that of Kuno. That of the Baroness was on the other side.

“We may discuss things freely,” he said, as he arranged the figures. “Vera is a doctor, you know, and quite a student in psychology. ... Besides, she knows all about your affair. ... It would have been transparent even to a beginner. ... Oh yes; Vera understood ... we have laughed together many times over your sophisticated vulgarities. ...”

The Professor retreated a step to gaze at the group on the divan.

“And now,” he said, “we will have a little celebration, no? A little celebration of our celebration . . . ach, that is funny, no? . . . Puns. . . . You see how happy I am: I make jokes . . . anyway, we celebrate to our mutual understanding . . . a glass of wine, no? . . . to drink each other’s healths and our several love-affairs . . .”

He pushed a low table before them and went to a cupboard in back of his table. From it he brought glasses and a bottle of wine. He set the glasses on the table and filled them. He lifted his.

“Come, our toast,” he cried, with a despairing gaiety. “I will make another joke . . . I have a pun. . . . You will, please, excuse it? . . . Then we drink to . . . ha-ha . . . to a wrong wife, but a married one!”

He laughed for the last time. The lid of the wooden box dropped, with a bang, behind him. He gasped and held to the work-table to recover himself. He turned toward the sound. It had struck his knotted nerves like a blow. His shoulders sagged. His whole body went limp as he turned again to the divan——

He stared. His jaw went slack. A despairing sound came from him. An incredulous moan.

"No," he said; and again: "No."

XLI

THE Professor continued to stare. . . .

While he stared, as if it were beyond belief, the figure of Kuno slipped sidewise, slowly, toward the figure of Vera. The easy smile that was Kuno's in life gave the movement a supercilious malice. It ended with the figure of Kuno slumped against that of Vera. Its handsome head rested against Vera's shoulder, which seemed to move to receive it.

"No." The Professor mumbled it like a prayer.

His weary body straightened. His shoulders were hunched high. His mouth hung open. It twisted into an animal snarl as his teeth ground together and then clenched.

He screamed. He stalked toward the divan, lips twitching and spittled with rage. His hand went out like a claw, seized the figure of Kuno

by the shoulder and roughly shoved it upright.

"You swine," he hissed.

He flung the wine from his glass into the smiling face. Then, with all his strength, he threw the glass. It broke against the waxen features. A splinter of glass cut his hand. The wine made a stain like thin blood on the Kuno face.

"Coward!" shouted the Professor. "Monster!"

He strode, stiff-legged, in front of the divan. He kept on shouting his hatred and his contempt. He screamed obscenities in the language of the gutter, and to them added obscenities in the discreet Latin of text-book footnotes. In his bilingual frenzy he ascribed to Kuno all the psychopathic shame he knew. The gibbering rush of words choked him. He tore at his tie and collar. His jerking hands went to his forehead, as if to press from it further infamy. When they fell again, there was a smear of blood down his cheek.

"Ingrate!" squealed the Professor. "Hyena! . . . not only brainless, but, for all your masculine brag, spineless. . . . Why do you not say something? . . . deny what I am saying? . . . do

not smirk at me, you rotter. . . . Twice a traitor, no? . . . Not only have you stolen my wife, poisoned her against me, but now you try to make love to my sweetheart . . . and you think because I let you betray me once, no, I will let you again? . . . I will not, do you hear? . . . I will not . . . I will kill you, Kuno . . . as you should be killed . . . do not laugh——”

He drew out the automatic pistol.

“Do not laugh, I tell you . . . I mean it, Kuno . . . you better pray, Graf Adelhorst . . . pray for the putridity that is your soul . . . I am going to kill you . . . kill you . . .”

Still raving, he fired. The bullet crashed into the figure of Kuno. The impact jarred it. The figure swayed, tipped forward and fell face down on the floor. It sprawled in a dramatic simulation of violent death.

The Professor crouched over the form and fired again. Then he stood up, stretched to his full height, threw back his head and howled. A long, shuddering howl; the howl of a wolf at the kill. He opened his eyes to glare at the shape of the Baroness.

“And you!” he shouted. “You go with your

lover . . . you, fashioned for a goddess, reek of your evil . . . and I, who offered you true immortality, now destroy you . . . farewell, my sweet Mitzl. . . .”

He raised the pistol deliberately, placed it against the waxen temple and fired. The bullet cracked the beautiful features. The form of the Baroness sprawled beside that of Kuno. The Professor groaned and turned away.

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Willi Zimmerkopf heard the shots. He leaped from his covert in the shadows and jumped up and down like a demented marionette. He whinnied. Then he rushed across the street and began banging on the apartment door with his slim fists and yammering. Kathi, the housekeeper, heard him. She also had heard the shots. She quaked and burrowed more deeply into her feather bed.

XLII

THE Professor's study was in half-darkness. The door of the secret chamber slid back silently. The doorway became an oblong of light. Its

illumination cast high-lights on the bronze casts. Nineteen heads seemed to watch the doorway. Through it, bent like a man carrying a burden beyond his strength, came the Professor. The pistol still was in his hand. He stood a moment, bowed, supporting himself on the side of the door. His silhouette threw a crazy shadow across the room, spread it against the innermost of the three curtains. There was, muffled and somewhere distant, a fantastic hammering and yammering. . . .

The Professor moved slowly into the room and to his desk. He fell into his chair, reached for the telephone and called for police headquarters, and Inspector Schnorrheim. . . .

Inspector Schnorrheim, engaged with another clue in the baffling Holzbruck case, lifted a heavy eyebrow and muttered a heavier guttural. Then, recognising the Professor's voice, which was professionally calm, he signalled out of habit to his stenographer to listen-in on the extension. They both heard the Professor's startling confession of double murder, and then:

"One moment . . . will you please hold the telephone?"

"Hey, wait!" called the Inspector.

There was no answer. Out of the far silence they heard only slow footsteps retreating . . .

The Professor had remembered something. He went slowly back into the secret chamber. Vera Petrovanof's smile shone over the two forms crumpled together in front of the divan.

"It is the end, Vera," said the Professor. "It is not the way I wished it . . . but it is so . . . I loved her, Vera . . . you know that . . . you know why I turned to you. . . . You are not yet a thorough scientist, but you know about that, no? . . . and then you, my last refuge, betrayed me for a handsome, empty face. . . ."

He screamed, as if a torturer had given the rack a final twist.

"It is the end," he said, and fired.

The footsteps, returning in slow crescendo. And Professor Volk's voice, calmly again, into the telephone.

"I have also just killed my mistress . . . ah, you will come at once? Thank you, Inspector . . . yes; yes, of course I'll wait . . ."

There was a grim scurrying at headquarters as Inspector Schnorrheim barked for his

emergency squad and his fastest police-car.

"Open-and-shut case," he said to his confidential lieutenant, Baumgarten, as they rushed to the car. "Professor Volk killed his wife and that good-looking loafer, Graf Adelhorst."

"Open-and-shut," agreed Baumgarten. "All Vienna knew about their affair."

"Except the Professor."

"It looks like he finally got wise."

"He said something about another dame. I heard him shoot her."

"It ain't like the Professor: another dame."

"It's going to be a scandal, Fritz."

The police siren screamed. . . .

Willi Zimmerkopf still was pounding on the street door. His excitement mounted as he heard the approaching siren. He leered with idiotic craft and darted back into the shadows. He watched the arrival of the police-car and the practised bustle of the detectives as they rushed the door. They rang the bell. They beat on the door. Kathi was close to suffocation and completely hysterical under her feather bed. Baumgarten looked at Inspector Schnorrheim, who nodded. Three wide-backed detectives heaved

their bulk against the door and tore it from its hinges. Inspector Schnorrheim led his men into the apartment.

Willi Zimmerkopf crept from the shadows and followed them. . . .

They found the Professor in his study. He was standing beside his desk, bracing himself with one hand. The other, dangling by his side, held the pistol. There was a smear of blood down his cheek. His collar was torn open. The signs of a terrific struggle. . . .

"Thank you, Max," he said, "for coming so quickly."

"Oh, that's all right," said Inspector Schnorrheim, his eye on the pistol.

"Do detectives always make so much noise?" the Professor asked.

The Inspector, approaching cautiously, seized the hand with the pistol. The Professor smiled.

"Do not fear, Max. I had no idea of suicide. Ha-ha. I could not, you see, because I am immortal."

"Sure," said the Inspector. "That's right."

The Professor saw a friendly, excited face behind the detectives.

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"Hello, Willi," he said; then to the Inspector: "I'm sorry not to have been more mysterious, Max . . . something, say, like the Holzbruck case . . . so you could wear a disguise . . ."

"Never mind that," said the Inspector. "Where are the, ah—the corpuses-delicti?"

Baumgarten answered with an exclamation from the doorway of the secret chamber.

"Here they are, Max," called Baumgarten. "*Gott im Himmel*, it's awful . . . three of 'em . . ."

Inspector Schnorrheim was at the doorway in two strides. He peered inside.

"It's the foul deed of a fiend!" he exclaimed.

"Huh?" said Baumgarten.

He joined the Inspector as he stepped toward the divan. They both leaned over the bundle of figures on the floor.

"It's her, all right," said the Inspector, "and him. And that must be——"

He placed his hand on the cheek of the nearest figure.

"Cold as Kelsburg's——" he began, and then: "Hey, they're——"

His hands touched the other faces. The head of the Baroness rolled out on the floor.

"Awk!" exclaimed Baumgarten.

He and his chief looked at each other. A pale, baffled look. Then, still baffled, they grinned.

"Dummies," said the Inspector.

"He's nuts," said Baumgarten.

"Him? Volk? . . . Nuts?"

"Them are the worst kind—wise guys."

Professor Volk still stood beside his desk. He held out his wrists as Lieutenant Baumgarten brought forth handcuffs. They began to move from the room and halted with a jerk, frozen in their stride.

An unearthly laugh came from the violated secret chamber. A long, shuddering yowl; the yowl of a lesser animal, late to the kill. It was the scream of Willi Zimmerkopf, hovering over the broken forms; Willi Zimmerkopf mourning his dead, screeching over a monstrous jest perpetrated for him alone. He had achieved his mania. Willi Zimmerkopf yowled.

XLIII

THEY won't talk, huh, those psychiatric

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colleagues of Professor Ernst Volk? Lock the mystery, will they, in the vault of the Wien Institute of Psycho-Criminological Research? The conspiracy of scientist silence was assisted by a students' riot performed the day after the Professor telephoned his confession to Inspector Schnorrheim. The students' riot was staged the Bruder-Bund zum Rothen-Stern to celebrate the anniversary of Bruder Meyer's ten-day martyrdom. It was a substantial demonstration and occupied the public mind and the Press for days.

It also occupied Inspector Max Schnorrheim, called into emergency service with his squad to crack heads at the cry of: "Hoch Meyer!" The inspector was glad enough to turn the Volk case over to the colleagues of the Professor. He had felt more than a trifle silly about it ever since he discovered that the ghastly victims were only dummies. And it really wasn't a mystery. At any rate, not a police mystery. There was no embarrassing corpus-delicti to account for.

Doctor Herbst, Schlager and Karpis, assigned to conduct the examination, would have been glad to share the Inspector's surrender of re-

sponsibility. The examination was conducted under guard in a basement room in the Clinic. Professor Volk was quite decent about it, and apparently not much interested in the outcome. The only hint of the old Volk came when Dr. Herbst, terrifically upset for a scientist, bungled a point of routine questioning. The Professor shook his head, unwilling to credit such clumsiness, and chided Dr. Herbst. It wasn't the old contemptuous fire, though; a weary tolerance. And, toward the end of the examination:

"Nonsense, gentlemen," said Professor Volk. "Let us not be too mysterious about this. There is no mystery, no plot, except in the mind. And the mystery of the mind I have entirely cleared in my latest work, which I recommend that you study as best you can; and which, I have no doubt, you will attempt to make mysterious again."

And once more, just before their abashed verdict:

"The mind of man," he said, "is like the horn on the snout of the rhinoceros. He is proud of it—the man as well as the rhinoceros—because it distinguishes him from other animals. Which

is an oblique consolation. However, as scientists, we must consider that the horn of the rhinoceros is the symbol of his decadence; the mark which indicates his species is ready for obliteration. The human species also cherishes its distinction, the feeble mental apparatus which presages its extinction. I leave to you, gentlemen, the task of polishing the rhinoceros-horn of the mind and celebrating it with your favourite incantations. I, Volk, am no longer interested."

He didn't speak again, although now and then a fugitive smile moved his lips.

The examining commission felt more comfortable when it undertook the diagnosis of Willi Zimmerkopf. Especially Dr. Herbst and Dr. Schlager, who remembered their first encounter with the irreverent creator of dummies. Dr. Karpis simply was incredulous that such an obvious type could ever have escaped the madhouse.

Both Professor Volk and Willi Zimmerkopf were ordered to an asylum by the Clinic commission. Professor Volk requested that they be confined together. The whim was granted. The Professor, after all, had been a potent figure.

And there was money enough to secure such whims. The Baroness saw to that. She was more distressed by the incident than the editor of *Die Wochenente* liked to believe. He relinquished his right to comment, however, after one sly remark in the question-marked column. Graf Adelhorst had visited the editor.

The Professor would not see either the Baroness or Kuno. He insisted that they were dead. Nor would he receive Fräulein Vera, for the same reason. She put his papers in such order as she could—they also are in the vault of the Institute—and returned to Russia. The Professor and Willi were established in a cottage at the edge of an asylum grounds in the country. Here they worked together, creating dummies so astonishingly life-like that half the shops in Vienna were their customers, and they had orders from Paris, Berlin, and even from New York. There were some figures, though, to which they became so attached that they refused to part with them at any price. Willi, during a leisure period, made a bronze likeness of the Professor, staining it with a preparation which they called *Zimmerkopf verdigris*. The Pro-

fessor was very happy.

The Professor was very happy. So was Willi, although he had always been that way. Fräulein Vera, as Dr. Petrovanof, became immersed in research of the Russian mental state and came to look on the Volk incident as another case-history; a little wistfully, perhaps, but another case-history. The Baroness and Kuno:

There was a journey to the south of France, after everything had been settled. And an evening with a scimitar blade of moon over the ramparts of old Carcassonne. They had driven, under the magic of sundown, across the ancient draw-bridge. They had strolled along the wide walls and down the narrow stone streets to a low-ceilinged tavern.

"*Kümmel* and *Kirchwasser*?" asked Kuno.

"Cognac, don't you think?" said the Baroness.

"It won't be Raynal '58 here. But what am I thinking about? Hi, *maître*!"

He ordered a natural champagne, a vintage too delicate to leave its own district. Its plain bottle bore a label which said only: "The sun makes me sing."

"I remember," said the Baroness.

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"There is much to remember, Mitzl; and much to forget."

"You'll help me, Kuno?"

"Here's your glass . . . help you?"

"To remember—and to forget."

"Will I not," said Kuno. "The sun will make us sing."

They drank, and across the horizon of their glasses dawned the look they had for each other; that look of unasking possession that was pleasant to see. A handsome, delightful and fairly scrupulous pair.

Thus, as was promised paradoxically: a happy, though Shakespearian, ending to a Shakespearian but unfatal narrative. What's that? Mystery? But there can be no mystery—no plot, for that matter—except, as Professor Volk himself has indicated, in the mind.